THE WAY INTO THE KINGDOM

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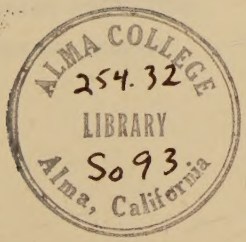
THE WAY INTO THE KINGDOM

A BOOK FOR ALL WHO TEACH

REPRINTED FROM *THE SOWER*
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR



LONDON
BURNS OATES & WASHBOURNE LTD.
PUBLISHERS TO THE HOLY SEE

NIHIL OBSTAT:

C. SCHUT, D.D.,
Censor Deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR:

EDM. CAN. SURMONT
Vicarius Generalis.

WESTMONASTERII,
Die 22c *Maii*, 1922.

First printed - 1922
Second impression 1927

Made and Printed in Great Britain

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION	7
I.	THE CHILDREN'S WAY	25
II.	"MICKY" AND OTHERS	28
III.	CHILDHOOD: THE DIVINELY ESTABLISHED CRITERION	33
IV.	THE "INTERIOR LIFE" OF CHILDREN	38
V.	THE IMAGINATION IN RELIGION	44
VI.	THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION	56
VII.	THE IDEA OF BEING SOMETHING	63
VIII.	THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CHARITY	71

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Introduction

THESE articles, which appeared in *The Sower* under the titles of "Meditation" and "Imagination," attracted such favourable attention that it has been thought well to reprint them, and here they are, with no more than a few minor additions and omissions. The author of them suggested that I should supply a sort of Introduction, to bring the idea of the articles into closer relation with conditions in school. I have an uncomfortable foreboding that the Introduction will be probably longer and certainly duller than the little book which it introduces; and, in fact, at this point, the best thing the reader can do will be to skip the rest of the Introduction and go straight to page 25, where I promise him he will not be bored; and then he can come back if he likes and read as much as he can get through of this Introduction about schools.

Definition of the Word "School."

It would really prevent a good deal of nonsense being talked if we all made a resolution never to use the word "school," but always the word "teacher" instead. A school is simply a place where there is a teacher; and it all depends on what sort of a teacher, and what he is doing there. When people talk about schools and what schools can do, they naturally have in their minds a picture of an ideal school including (though they may not advert to the fact) an ideal teacher: some teacher of wonderful insight and sympathy and eloquence, with a mind ranging easily over the whole field of human knowledge, and a tireless enthusiasm that goes along with perfect physical health; "some" teacher, in short. It is not merely the man in the street who talks in this way (indeed, he

often knows better); it is chiefly those who have most to do with education—officials and administrators and superintendents, and so forth. They are aware that "born teachers" are, in fact, rather few, and that still fewer find their way into schools; but they persist in acting as if all the thousands of ordinary willing teachers could do the things that "born teachers" do, if they only tried hard enough. They can't; but for some decades past the whole training of teachers and the whole organisation of schools has presupposed that they can. Always that "born teacher" has dominated the rest and imposed his methods upon them; it has never occurred to anybody to take the *actual teachers* as they are, and consider what they really *could* do well, and show them how to do it.

The Use and Abuse of Class-Teaching.

The existing problem centres itself round the matter of class-teaching and class-lessons. The "born teacher" can make a success of class-lessons, and therefore the class-lesson is the ideal which all teachers are made (with disastrous results) to aim at. So the reader must excuse some little disquisition on this matter.

The best class-teaching is based on the fact that a class of children, like a football crowd or a theatre audience or a church congregation, has a sort of collective mind—which is not simply the sum of its individual minds, but a sort of super-mind which can be called into existence by the good teacher. Once it is brought into existence, this collective mind is a very real thing. Class-teaching of poor quality aims only at discovering the lowest common denominator of the intelligence of the different individuals, and bringing each individual, if possible, up to that level. But good class-teaching creates the collective super-mind, and then the class *as a whole*—corporately—is capable of higher flights than even the brightest individual in it. Hence, in this type of pedagogy, it is always "the class" to which the teacher's efforts are directed; he is to remind "the class" of this, or question "the class" about that, or lead "the class" on to suggest such and such things.

Excellent. Excellent, especially for a Sunday-school method in the hands of a gifted teacher. But what has to be borne in mind is that the evoking and sustaining of this collective super-mind is a considerable strain on the teacher. At its best and most successful it involves a sustained activity on the teacher's part; at its worst it becomes a recitation by the teacher, with the class relapsing into the passive collection of separate individuals which is the condition of a grown-up cinema audience. There is also, of course, a certain strain on the class itself. Every good teacher knows well that the full activity of the collective class-mind cannot be kept up even for a whole lesson together; there must be what someone (is it Mr. Richmond?) calls "disintegration-periods," during which the collective consciousness takes a rest while its achievements are registered and assimilated by the individual minds, in some process of questioning or working out of exercises.

The Strain on the Teacher.

But the point we wish to insist on is that the "giving" of a good "class-lesson" means a great expenditure of vitality on the part of the teacher; and therefore it is impracticable and unwise to regard it as the ordinary way of spending time in school. One such "lesson" a day—not one in each subject, but one such lesson of *any* sort—is probably enough for the most robust teacher. Far too much in this way—ridiculously too much, in fact—is already expected in secular subjects from the teachers in elementary schools, and the training provided for them is—or has been—directed almost entirely to this impossible and inhuman ideal of a perpetual succession of "class-lessons." The whole school organisation, the time-table arrangements, the very school furniture—all presuppose the same thing.

In short, this impossible ideal is the ideal which teachers are encouraged to attempt, and which thousands and thousands of them do attempt with astonishing heroism. But it is an impossible ideal, for all that; in proof of which we need only point to three facts: (1) The notorious ill-

health, especially on the nervous side, which is a mark of the teaching profession at present—a strange thing, for why should the care of children and young people have such a lowering effect on vitality? (2) The ever-diminishing number of candidates desirous of becoming teachers; for even children can see that class-teaching is an occupation which takes more than its fair toll of wear and tear. (3) The universal complaints about the *results* of our system of education.

The Limits of Listening.

So much from the point of view of the teacher, and the teacher's doctor. But from the standpoint of the learners, too, simultaneous class-teaching as an everyday method is a very doubtful ideal, because it tends to relieve the individual child of his share of the burden; there is profound truth in the saying that "a man knows only those things which he has found out for himself." Therein lies the advantage of what I may call the *seminal* or *occasional* way of teaching, and the disadvantages of what is called "drumming in."

A distinguished Scottish professor, of a statistical turn of mind, recently calculated that there are sixty thousand sermons preached in Great Britain every Sunday morning. He mentioned this estimate at a large gathering in Scotland, and it is on record in the *Annandale Observer* that the humour of it did not escape the notice of his audience. There was, in fact, laughter. The professor went on to wonder (and one finds oneself wondering with him) whether, on the whole, people are any the better for these sixty thousand sermons; he hoped (rather doubtfully) that they are not any the worse. That such things should find utterance in Scotland, the homeland *par excellence* of the sermon, surely provides a good many points for meditation; and anyhow, it will furnish us here with a useful illustration of the dangers of overmuch didactic instruction. The fact is that the capacity of human beings for being talked at is strictly limited. It is nearly always over-estimated by the people whose business it is to do the talking. *All* sermons

are too long. Talking is often necessary to start people off thinking; but once that is done it is time to stop talking, and when the preacher goes on too long we all know by our own mental experience that he arouses antagonism rather than agreement. The practical error of Protestantism in throwing over the sacraments and pinning its faith to the sermon is now obvious to everybody, even if there were no fed-up Scotch professors to point the moral for us. If a preacher has something that he really wants to say, by all means let him make a sermon of it and hold forth to whoever will listen; but to preach a set discourse to one's fellow-creatures week after week simply out of a dour sense of duty is a thing which surely no one with any sense of humanity could attempt without secret misgivings.

The More Excellent Way.

The Catholic way, of course, is quite different (though we do not claim that all Catholics are quite clear about it). The Catholic way is to get people to come to Mass and then to let Our Lord speak for Himself. That is the main idea, and anything else is merely accessory. Faith indeed comes by hearing; but elaborate sermons in particular the real Catholic regards as things for special occasions or seasons—Lent for choice. He does not want to be preached at and exhorted; no healthy person does. The genuine Catholic feeling, therefore, favours not sermons, but instruction; instruction little and often.

We should have no difficulty in showing that all the teaching of Our Lord and the Apostles was occasional teaching. Later on, too, the main stream of Catholic teaching in church—the patristic or homiletic style—was a strictly casual commentary (with practical bearings) on the particular passage of Scripture which happened to be read that particular day; and the tradition lingers to this extent at any rate, that the preacher at Mass feels under a sort of obligation to take his text from the Gospel of the day; that is to say, he feels there would be a certain immodesty in thrusting himself into the middle of the Mass with a discourse of his own quite unconnected with what is going on.

In short, he feels that all "preaching" should be *occasional*—it needs an occasion of some sort to justify it, even if the occasion is only the Sunday Gospel. He does not feel the same difficulty about a mere short instruction, because a course of instructions *is* an occasion in itself.

How Boredom Revenges Itself.

The essential point of these reflections (yes, there really *is* a point!) is that we all have an instinctive objection to being made the audience of a discourse whether we like it or not. We may like it sometimes, but we want to choose our times; of course, we can't always choose; nevertheless, if we are talked at when we don't want to listen, when our faculties of attention are exhausted, we revenge ourselves internally by disagreeing with the speaker, or externally by coughing or going to sleep. And the quintessential point is this: that if all this is true of grown-up people, with their adult minds and their reposeful bodies, it is a hundred times more true of children. Upon children we have no scruples in imposing an amount of sheer listening that we would not dream of enduring ourselves. And in school we demand *real* listening, too. No care-charming sleep allowed, as in church. No restful attitudes, as in Parliament. No drawing on blotting-paper, or any other of the little unconscious tricks that make listening and thinking easier. Bolt-upright, eyes-front, unmitigated listening! It is magnificent, but it is not teaching.

What Makes a Good Teacher?

That, then, is the wrong school-ideal which is largely in possession, and which has to be got rid of before we can find a teaching-method which shall base itself on the children's own activity (activity of mind or body, or both) and which shall make full use of occasions. The difficulty, of course (if indeed it is a difficulty), is that this way requires more thought. The talking way entails a cruel nervous strain during school-hours; but the other way perhaps requires most care in preparation. Just as it probably needs more thought to be a good confessor than

to be a preacher of good sermons (the present writer, being neither, can decide this point with complete impartiality), so it probably needs more thought to be a good teacher *à la* Montessori than to be a good teacher along the other lines. More thought—that is to say, a great practical resourcefulness and a keener human interest in the children; not necessarily more brains, or more intellectual ability, by any means. We are not all brainy, thank God, but we can all study the children around us, and think out ways and means to set their activity going; and, in fact, we should find ourselves doing so quite naturally and interestingly if we made a good resolution to give our class-lesson voice a well-earned holiday.

The Decentralisation of the Class.

Under any method of learning, of course, there will always be a place for occasional class-teaching. Some things, like singing, can be treated much better that way than any other way. And in all subjects a class-lesson at intervals, made as memorable and inspiring as may be, is a real necessity. But on the whole class-lessons *should* be at intervals. For the routine of ordinary day-teaching what we want (in religious instruction as in other subjects) is some method that will combine the least nervous tension on the part of the teacher with the maximum sense of discovery on the part of the learners. For children of tender age the problem has been solved in principle by Froebel and in practice by Montessori. Again, for children of the secondary-school age (our "third period" of the "*Sower* scheme") there need be no real problem; "free work" is known and practised in hundreds of schools, and class-lessons turn into something much easier for the teacher—a lecture, with the pupils taking notes. But between the free methods of the infant school and the free methods of the upper school it cannot be said that there is yet any satisfactory bridge. We need something similar for the middle school, say seven or eight to twelve years old—some method that will set the teacher free to become the guide, philosopher, and friend of each member of the class individually; instead of

trying to be (I speak in epigrams, as one less wise) at one and the same time a "spell-binder" and a drill-sergeant and the chairman of a public meeting.

"Drawing Out" and "Putting In."

When such ideas as the above are set forth, there is one objection that is sure always to be urged: that "you cannot draw out what you haven't put in." But can't you? It's just what you *can* do, when you are dealing with living things. You go into your garden, for instance, and gather some flowers. Well, but you have never put those flowers into the soil; what you did put in was the seeds, at their appointed time of sowing. There is no need to "put" everything complete into the mind of the class and then "draw it out" as "expression-work." In short, the value of direct didactic instruction can be greatly exaggerated. You can often tell the class (even as a class) all that you want to tell them, in three minutes, and all the subsequent "drumming in" will not add to the effect; but the gentle art of teaching consists above all things in dropping seeds—casual remarks, little explanations, ready answers, half-hints, or suggestions—into the individual mind just when it is ready for them. The only thing needed to make this possible, and to give the teacher time to think and observe, is to invent a suitable framework or background of method-routine.

Psychology to the Rescue.

In a famous controversy Charles Kingsley accused Dr. Newman of having sometimes preached a whole sermon for the sake of bringing in one apparently casual sentence. What Dr. Newman said in reply I cannot at the moment call to mind; he probably contented himself with refuting the absurd insinuation that the rest of his sermon was thereby suspect of insincerity. For apart from the suggestion of insincerity there was certainly nothing in the accusation to be ashamed of. Newman must have been well aware of this, for he knew all about psychology in practice at a time when psychology (except for the genuine

if often empirical kind that was buried away in Catholic ascetical literature) did not exist. That, in fact, was the secret of his power as a teacher. He was interested above all in the psychological aspect of everything; in men's ideas and feelings and hidden motives, and the connections between feeling and action. He wanted to know what it *felt like* to make an act of faith, or to be an unbeliever, or to die, or (even) to be a lost spirit. A book like Wellington's Peninsula despatches would fascinate him, not because he had any interest in the events related, but because he wanted to know what it felt like to be a great General. Jane Austen's novels held his attention just because of their psychological realism. Newman invented no new terminology—or hardly any—but when his subject was mental process (and it was his subject nearly always), he put such new reality of meaning into the old phraseology that his hearers felt that he was opening out for them a new vista into truth. And so he was.

Since Newman had thought so long and so deeply about the ways in which ideas take hold of the mind, it would have been surprising indeed if he had not used his knowledge of human nature in the methods of his own special art of teaching; and in point of fact he did. In particular, he knew very well the value of indirect teaching. Kingsley's allegation was somewhere on the way to the truth as regards the mere fact alleged, though he was egregiously wrong in his conclusion from it; and Newman must have felt the hopelessness of attempting to explain the distinction to a generation in which he was the only psychologist extant—one born, as it were, out of due time. Nowadays, however, there is enough psychology about to make a sort of diffused atmosphere; it is mostly rather inferior to Newman's, and it is largely spoilt for practical purposes by an over-fondness for labels and long words; still, there it is, and it is common property. Everyone that cares to take the trouble can now share in some small way the secret of Newman's power as a teacher.

The Need of Assimilation.

Those who used to speak of Newman's "magnetic personality" did him no great service, for it was a very unfortunate description of his power. Personal magnetism is the lowest and least reputable way of dealing with one's fellow-creatures, and Newman would have been the last man to exploit any such method. What he believed in was *personal influence*—a vastly different thing. He never wanted to *dominate* other minds; but in all his thought and in his way of expressing it, there was that indefinable quality (of reality, as of one who has "been there," and as of something still in reserve) which fertilises other minds and sets them thinking for themselves. Now this (to come back to our practical point) is the great advantage of indirect or casual teaching. There are many ways of indirect teaching, and they are all legitimate enough if they are used with sincerity, and if their appeal is to thought and reason. They are all much more effective than mere direct expounding, and therefore we all use them naturally and unreflectingly in the course of ordinary life; but in school, where there is the widest and most promising field for them, they are often neglected altogether. We don't leave enough room for what my colleague in this book (following St. Thomas's use of the word rather than that of current Catholic phraseology) has called "meditation." We think we must tell the children all about everything ourselves, and go on telling them over and over again until it sticks. And when, after all that, it still doesn't seem to stick to most of them, or sticks only for a day or two, or sticks perhaps only on the surface without going deep enough to influence their conduct, we wonder what can be wrong with them. There is nothing wrong with them, except that their little intellectual insides are suffering from being continually stuffed with predigested food.

Of the Wisdom of Parenthesis.

One likely way, then, of getting an idea or fact remembered and thought about, is to bring it in casually when

you are talking about something quite different. You can work it in as an illustration, perhaps, or in a mere incidental parenthesis; and the mere fact that it is slightly unexpected will make it "sink in." Anyone can verify this for himself by searching a little into his own mental past: the sayings of our teachers that we remember best and that have borne most fruit were often precisely the sayings that had nothing much to do with the lesson in hand. Strange, perhaps, that it should be so, but so it is; and if you want specially to impress upon your Catholic children the obligation (let us say) of supporting their pastors—which we are often assured is an item of religious knowledge much neglected—you might do worse than mention it as a passing inspiration arising out of one of those knotty problems of high finance which help to beguile the hours devoted to arithmetic. Indeed, such casual references are the very essence of what is called "correlation." Correlation is a blessed word, much on the lips of inspectors and such-like people at one time, so that it was in danger of being practised as a mere wooden system; one could almost imagine its being given a place on the timetable, as was actually the fate of "handwork." "Correlation?" one has heard a philosophic headmistress remark—"correlation? Correlation's all dropped through now, hasn't it?" Real correlation consists in linking up one branch of knowledge with another chiefly by means of incidental remarks, thus giving an atmosphere of greater reality to all. The born teacher does this naturally and instinctively; and we others also, who are not born but made, can do it by taking thought.

Of Putting First Things First.

Another way of getting children (or anybody else) to think about something, is concerned with the relative importance with which we invest it. We see this exemplified every day in the Press; two or three newspapers can set forty million people's minds thinking about the price of margarine simply by big headlines and placards. Just as easily, if they wish, they can set the forty millions thinking

about the next war. As used by the newspapers, of course, this method is mere illegitimate suggestion, miles apart from any appeal to reason. But there is no reason why we should not give all due relative importance to what is true; and when we do so, we are not practising mere irrational suggestion; we are trying to make people think, not to prevent them thinking. It is here that actions speak louder than words. Canon Keatinge points the moral for us in school, in words which, though written twenty years ago, have still a point, *mutatis mutandis*, to-day:

"What is the most important thing in the school? The merit grant, the feasts of the Church, H.M. Inspector's visit, the religious lessons, the cookery competition, the classes for the Sacraments? What place do the holidays of obligation hold in the life of the school? Have they any other significance except that they pull down the average for that week? Have we a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary? Is it much broken? The crucifix, is it fly-blown? Our pupil-teachers? They must pass the scholarship examination, or else—— but the religious examinations, must they be passed too? The month of May and its flowers; November and its Masses; Lent and its Way of the Cross, as well as its offerings for destitute children—are we a little coy about this last form of piety while we approve entirely of the November Masses? I need not labour the point; the way these things are done, their place in the life of the school, will tell us enough. The children know quite well what comes first in the eyes of the priest, in the eyes of the teacher. The same comes first in theirs; it is nature's law with the child."

Of Questions and Answers.

Yet another opportunity of incidental teaching—perhaps, indeed, it is the most important opportunity, or ought to be—is provided by questions. Questions play a large part in school, but too often the questioning is rather one-sided. The questions of the teacher play a useful part; but, as Rousseau and many others have pointed out, the questions of the children are much more important. When

the disciple asks a question, it shows that his mind is *ready* for the answer; if not for the whole answer, at any rate for an instalment of the truth. What you tell him *now* will not be wasted; your single sentence of answer will be more effective *now* than a whole lesson would have been before. When you discourse to the whole class following a formal programme, you are scattering seeds at random—you may reasonably hope that some will take root, but there is a large element of luck in it. But when you are ready with the right answer to a question, you are planting a seed in a place where it is sure to grow; like that old sea-captain of Nelsonian days in one of Conan Doyle's books, who always carried a pocketful of acorns and planted one deep into the soil with his stick whenever he noted a likely spot, so that the oak for England's men-o'-war should not fail in times to come.

A question is a manifestation of interest on the part of the questioner—a revelation of "the growing end of the mind." Of course, people sometimes ask questions out of mere politeness; and even children may do this sometimes, if they think you expect questions, for children are profoundly polite; but there is no difficulty in discerning the questions of genuine curiosity and interest. When a child asks a question, then, or contributes one of those spontaneous remarks that are as good as a question, that is an *event,* and the teacher who cultivates the art of giving brief satisfying answers will have his reward. (Also, if he doesn't know an answer, he should say so, especially in matters of religion and theology, where a lame answer may often do harm.) The teacher of real genius will even know how to use occasionally the simple strategy of *waiting* for an almost inevitable question before he propounds the idea or information which he wants to make known. Teaching, after all, is largely a matter of such innocent stratagems, and the successful teacher is he who rejoices in contriving them.

And, incidentally, of Discipline.

Only, if questions from the pupil are so significant and so useful as opportunities, it is plain that the pupils must feel at liberty to put them; and this is one of the many points which underline the connection between right pedagogy and right discipline. There are class-rooms where a child would as soon think of standing on his head during a lesson as dream of asking the teacher a question. The teacher may encourage questions in theory and even sometimes ask for them; but if they are never forthcoming spontaneously, it is surely a symptom of something wrong, and he may well examine his conscience to see what he or his predecessors have been doing to create such a frost-bound landscape of sub-human docility. If we encourage questions, then, and impart a good deal of our teaching in that incidental form, we shall once more be following the practice of the Divine Teacher of teachers. Our Lord seldom taught by way of asking questions Himself—only on the rarest and most momentous occasions—but He always made full use of the questions of others. If we took away all Our Lord's teaching that was given in answer to some question or comment, there would be comparatively little left. Even His enemies knew that He was always willing to be "drawn" in this way; and it was not until His time was accomplished that He so dealt with His interlocutors that no man from that day forth durst ask Him any more questions.

Of the Possibilities in Drama.

Many other little ways of incidental teaching will occur to the reader's mind, such as in the course of learning hymns or prayers; or liturgical and seasonal occasions, or in the preparation of playlets, or (in moral teaching especially) the hundred and one daily incidents of school-life. These need not be enlarged upon here, except that I should like specially to emphasise the usefulness of playlets. There is in drama such a happy meeting of all the streams

which make up true education, that drama might quite conceivably be chosen as the chief material of all schooling. Without going quite so far as that, there can be no doubt whatever about the usefulness of playlets as an occasional device; and by playlets I mean not particularly a stage-and-footlights performance, but rather a little class-room project—written, maybe, by the children themselves, and performed with brief preparation and with only so much extempore costume and accessories as may serve to give a spur to the imagination. If ideas are to be imparted in an *occasional* way, the aim of teaching-method must be to devise suitable *occasions*; and the preparation and performance of a playlet obviously make an occasion for a good deal of casual instruction, which will stick in the children's minds all the better because it is connected with something they are doing.

Wanted—a Routine Method.

In general, therefore, let us aim at much *shorter and rarer spells of direct class-instruction, and a more deliberate utilising of casual opportunities* of instruction, whether collective or individual. This aim granted, the question arises, Is it not possible to invent for religious instruction a *routine method* which shall be elastic enough to allow the above aim to be followed? Every school-subject has a special method of its own—that is to say, a set of practical devices which someone invented some time or other and which have been found by experience to be the best way for average teachers to teach that particular subject. Religion, in so far as it is a subject which can be taught (as well as a spirit which can only be caught), needs a particular method of its own just as much as any other school-subject. There ought to be an ordinary and recognised technique of doctrinal teaching, which would be communicated as a matter of course to every Catholic teacher. Needless to say, there exists nothing of the kind. A teacher here or there, or perhaps a whole teaching-group, may, out of pure zeal and with no encouragement, evolve a little technique of their own; and such an achieve-

ment naturally comes to be thought of as a sort of patent to be jealously guarded rather than as a discovery to be shared with all. But for the majority of Catholic teachers there is not even this much help. What they do know is that this Catechism and these prayers have got to be memorised by these children; theirs not to reason why nor how, but simply to take the shortest road to the accomplishment of a rather formidable task. Most schools have an hour a day for religious instruction; the teacher certainly cannot be talking all that time, and no one can suppose (once they give the matter a moment's serious thought) that the children are suitably occupied by being set to con their printed Catechisms whenever nothing particular is going on. Wanted—a method.

Home-Made Catechisms.

As before indicated, the infant school can get along very well with stories and pictures, and so forth, while for children of twelve and upwards the method question should present no difficulty either. It is for the middle school, say eight to twelve years old, that some way is needed of learning the Catechism without killing the religious instinct. I do not agree with those who would abolish the Catechism altogether, or even the learning of it by heart; because it provides the laity with a "sound form of words," and it also provides their pastor with a common ground of theological formula which he can use and build upon in his preaching. Only, our English Catechism is about twice as long as it need be. A rational and sensible way of learning the Catechism in the middle school has, as a matter of fact, been thought out; and it was explained in *The Sower* in a series of articles called "The Middle School," by Miss A. M. Scarre. The essential point of it is that the children should not possess those little printed Catechisms (which soon become for them nothing but dog-eared symbols of drudgery) at all, but should make their own Catechism-books for themselves as they go along. The Catechism answers (it doesn't matter about the questions, except for the outside examiner, whose convenience I am disregard-

ing) are built up with brief explanation on the blackboard, and then the children would write them into their books, making them as beautiful as possible with pictures pasted in, symbolic decoration, appropriate texts of Scripture, prayers, verses, and so on, according to individual inspiration. At some period in the process, no doubt, the Catechism answers, or at any rate the important ones, would be learned by heart. Four years would produce a home-made Catechism in four volumes, doubtless a thing of beauty and a joy for ever to its youthful maker. This idea of Miss Scarre's has the simplicity, combined with infinite possibilities, which is the mark of a genuine first-class idea. Why didn't we ever think of it before? It has all the characteristics of a real teaching-method. The making of the book provides a permanent aim for the religious-instruction time (it must not be confused with mere expression-work, for it is the work itself). It keeps the children occupied; gives them a chance to be *doing* something, and doing it at their own pace; gives much scope for individual differences of enterprise and ability, and for the right sort of emulation; and leaves them a sort of leisure for thinking over things (and children do think if they are allowed to). Its advantages to the teacher are just as evident; it relieves him of the strain of many class-lessons, or of keeping order in a class which is not properly occupied, and it gives him full leisure to watch and observe and go round the class individually with his suggestions and hints and information and encouragement; in short, to practise the art of incidental teaching under the most favourable conditions.

The Meditative Mood.

Even an Introduction must end some time, and this will be the last paragraph. In such ways as I have been describing, then, it seems to me that what Fr. Roche, S.J., has called the "meditative mood" (which is so important in religion) could be encouraged even in schools, or could at any rate be given a chance of coming into existence. And that is as far as I should care to go. I should be very reluctant to recommend anything in the way of formal

organised mental prayer for children, though I have heard of such a thing being attempted. One way or another, with preparation for the Sacraments, thanksgiving, rosary, and so on, Catholic children achieve a certain amount of more-or-less-mental prayer already; and to ask them to make little set "meditations" on given points, unaccompanied by any activity of the body or senses (as practised by grown-ups, though not always with success), would strike me as going too far. There wouldn't be much harm, perhaps, in merely suggesting it for use in private; and children are so variously made that it would never surprise me to know that this or that child was well on the way to becoming a Carmelite or a Carthusian. But organised formal mental prayer, even of a voluntary kind—well, I think not. The children, or many of them, would be willing enough to try, if we pressed it on them; but there is the very real danger of over-stimulating. The one and only good point about many of the prevailing methods of religious instruction is that they do not over-stimulate the religious instinct: the children are so thoroughly bored that *that* question does not arise. And when we have tried to follow a better way, and have succeeded by God's help in arousing the intelligent devotion of warm little hearts to Mary's Son, we must often be wisely content to stand aside and watch Him do His own work there in the way that He knows.

F. H. DRINKWATER.

I.—The Children's Way

TO some people I suppose personal religion (as distinct from public worship) appears to be primarily a *subjective* affair. Now, children are very *objective.* Hence there are people who imagine that children are not really interested in religion.

But religion, in its spiritual and moral aspects, as well as in its doctrinal and ceremonial aspects, is really quite simple and objective. Hence (leaving aside, of course, the sublimities of the Saints) there is no part of religion that cannot be interesting to the children, and be shared in and loved by them. And although we may say it has a *subjective* effect on them, inasmuch as it becomes a moving power and effects a transformation in them, nevertheless it is an essentially simple, un-self-conscious subjectivity—a kind of natural, spontaneous application of ideas and facts to *self,* which does not tend to make self the centre of interest.

I am not here going to deal with the big question of religious education, but only to comment on a certain aspect of it from a quite unprofessional point of view. All I am going to do is to consider the way in which, if I were a mother or a governess or a teacher, I should try and present religious ideas to my children; or, more exactly, the way in which I should want them to approach the ideas.

First, I should wish them to approach with interest—with enthusiasm. That shouldn't be hard, because children are naturally enthusiastic, and they are intensely interested in interesting things—and what is more fascinatingly interesting than that there is an unseen world about us, in which dwells One Who loves us; that He has certain ways by which He gets in touch with us, and we with Him; that once He rent the invisible veil and came amongst us; that there are ways of behaving He wishes to see in us, and ways He dislikes; that there are things we can do which

particularly please Him; that He's promised us splendid things; that He's warned us of awful horrors, and of dangers very near us? . . . Surely there's enough here to keep children asking why? how? when? what? all day long! And the answers are sufficiently wonderful to keep them happy, enthralled, deeply interested for years and years.

Secondly, having approached the idea enthusiastically, I should like them to want really to understand it, just as they want to understand all the other things that happen every day, or are described in the papers, or occur for the first time in their experience.

Thirdly, having understood what was told them, I should expect them to think about it, turn it over in their minds, wonder about it, discover things about it, make it so much their own that it would become wholly reasonable, quite unforgettable. I should expect them to deduce from it their own course of action; and (knowing the purity of the child's heart and his energy) I should guess that the right action would follow as effect follows cause. Now, this is a kind of *meditation* on the facts of religion; and it is the idea that this natural thing should be encouraged, that children should be taught to meditate, rather than the children crammed with knowledge, that I want to bring forward. That they can thus meditate I am quite sure; and also that they *do* do it, when their poor little minds and memories have not been over-tired or over-irritated, I know—and of this I will presently give a few examples.

Of course, the person whom God originally intended to be the child's religious instructor is the child's *mother*. And for a mother, with her two or three little ones, and the "atmosphere" of love, and the "environment" of little white beds in the twilight, with the flame-flicker within, and the star-twinkle outside the window, the gentle, simple, meditative aspect of religious teaching presents no difficulties. It is the unnatural conditions under which religious instruction has often to be given that makes it so easy to slip into wrong ways—and not only wrong *ways*, but wrong *methods*.

The tendency is to make the instruction of the tender, eager soul of a child in the beautiful things of God almost aggressively objective: the doctrine and the Scripture lessons easily become cut-and-dried fragments of a "subject" which must be mastered to satisfy the examiner. (Of course, the individual personality of the teacher can and does greatly mitigate the awfulness of the above picture—just as it can also accentuate it.) It is not, therefore, altogether surprising if children are not exactly enthusiastic about religion; and if on leaving school and dropping the school routine they should also drop the practice of their religion—with, perchance, a sigh of relief.

The majority of children, then, fail to take interest in religion because the facts are made uninteresting and portioned out to them as very "dry rations"; and instead of being allowed to meditate on the sublime truths of the Faith, their little minds are hustled on from fact to fact. But while some children lose all vital interest in religion, there are a great many who do not. The desire for God and the things of God is too deeply rooted in their hearts to be destroyed by the blunders of man. Out of the multitude of facts drummed into them they seize on this and that, and by thinking about it in their own way, they come to understand it, make it their own, and love it. What is more, they even deduce a simple kind of course of action from it. If one gets to know children well, under natural and free kind of circumstances, one learns a great deal. And seeing what they can accomplish for themselves against such odds, one comes to realise what line, if carefully and sympathetically followed, would bear fruit unto life everlasting.

II.—"Micky" and Others

PERHAPS the best thing I can do is to tell a few "true stories." My aim is to show that children *do meditate* on spiritual ideas.

I was once walking with three small boys, aged eleven, ten, and nine, in a seaside village. "Eleven-years-old" was stalking ahead, dangling on a long piece of string the carcase of a plaice, which he had begged from the fishmonger, and wherewith he had caught many crabs, that morning. "Nine-years-old" was telling me all about the *'normous* shrimp he had caught yesterday. "Ten-years-old" was walking the other side, and his mind was far away. Presently he remarked (quite unconcernedly interrupting the tale about the shrimp): "Our Lord had no favourites." "Didn't He?" I said. "Who told you that, Micky?" "Well," he replied, "no one didn't tell me—I thought it out for myself. You see, one day our master said John was Our Lord's special friend; and in a few days after he said Our Lord made Peter the head of His Church. So I thought to myself that it was because Peter was *strong* He made him that, and not 'cos He liked him best. So Our Lord had no favourites."

Small Micky, continuously restless, quarrelsome, imaginative, had been *medttating*. I liked the assured way he spoke. And really there was great depth of meaning in the thought. He said no more, but his small heart had gone on to rejoice in the fact that Our Lord was not like the grown-ups; He was fair and treated people according to their real merits. Also, he vaguely understood a great truth that some day, perhaps, he would be glad to grasp more fully—the idea of special vocation, of God's need of "strong" people in difficult places, and of others, like "friends," that must just keep close to Our Lord and serve Him by their "friendship"—remembering, always, that "Our Lord has no favourites."

Probably that master little knew what deep thoughts

Micky had deduced from his bald statements about St. John and St. Peter, in the lesson on the Apostles.

One Sunday morning, in a London street that was unwontedly quiet, a small boy asked me why English people thought it wrong to play cricket on Sunday; he had heard it was not so in Ireland. I explained Puritanism. The small boy meditated for quite a long time, and then he remarked, "But it doesn't please Our Lord, because He used to have sport Hisself, when He was a boy." He announced this fact about Our Lord as one who knows a thing for certain, because the one under discussion is personally known, a friend. It was the same boy who had once told me that he *nearly* cried, because he was in the middle of reading one of Fr. Roche's "Child's Prayers to Jesus," when his father "outed the light," and he couldn't finish it; "and it wasn't half a good tale," he added. The fact was, the "tale" was a little meditation that interested him and had captured his heart.

It will be noticed that, in each of these little conversations, the personality of Christ was the dominant idea in the boy's mind; and this, from what I have noticed, seems to be very generally the case. But what more natural? The children are only proving in practice what the greatest of Christian theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas, once very beautifully expressed as follows:

"It is due to the weakness of the human mind that just as it needs to be led by the hand to the knowledge of Divine things, so also must it be led to Divine love by means of the things of sense already known to it; and the chief of these things is the Humanity of Christ, as is said in the *Preface* of the Mass: '*So that knowing God visibly in the flesh, we may thereby be carried away to the love of things invisible.*' Consequently the things that have to do with Christ's humanity lead us, as it were, by the hand and are thus especially suited to stir up devotion in us."*

I have often noticed that a mention of Our Lord always has the effect of producing an immediate "recollection" (so to speak) among children. The idea of "pleasing

* "Summa," IIa, IIæ, Q. lxxxii., Art. 3.

God," "God's Will," etc., seems to be an intellectual conception, which, though treated reverently and seriously by Catholic children, does not awaken much response. Whereas a mention of Our Lord seems to touch a personal chord in each small heart. You *feel* it if you tell them a story from the lives of the Saints, for instance, and there is an incident like the Voice of Our Lord speaking to St. Francis in the little Church at San Damiano; or an incident connected with the Blessed Sacrament. They seldom mention Him, themselves—but what child ever speaks of what is nearest his heart? And yet I believe they think of Him quite a lot. I think, if it were possible to ascertain what, to use the popular phrase, is *the* "devotion" of the children, it would prove to be just Our Lord Himself.

Quite tiny children are always intensely interested in pictures and stories of Our Lord. I remember once standing outside the Catholic Repository near the Carmelite Church, Kensington. The window was full of devotional pictures of every sort. Near me stood an over-dressed, rather coarse-looking woman, and a lovely small boy of four, very much like Filippo Lippi's winsome little angels. The small boy was talking eagerly, and pointing out pictures. "There He is again, mother, . . . mother, look—what are they doing to Him, here?" Some vague, half-attentive reply from "mother," and the boy presses his face to the window and pursues his eager quest. "And here there's a lady with Him. . . . And what's He doing now? . . ." All over the big window his shining eyes run quickly, fastening on each picture of Our Lord and noting every detail. How I long to join in and contribute a little information to help on that eager "meditation"! For "mother," alas! either doesn't know or doesn't care; and presently the small boy is dragged away by the wrist, looking petulantly back to catch a last glimpse of the One Who said, "Suffer the little children to come to Me." I found the same thing with a baby boy of two and a half, who liked to be carried round the room that he might point out the pictures of Our Lord.

Now, it seems to me that the children themselves give us a clue as to the starting-point for all their meditation

and instruction. When "Micky" made his remark about Our Lord's thoughts concerning St. Peter and St. John, he was unconsciously making a splendid suggestion. What a fruitful source of meditation would be a study of *each person* recorded in the Gospels as coming in contact with our Blessed Lord, and what He must have thought of them, and what they thought about Him, and how they acted, and how they *might* have acted, and how we should have liked to have acted in their place, and what was the outcome of this great grace that came into their lives, of meeting Jesus! If you come to think of it, every type of human character is represented, each with his modern equivalent.* Now, set children thinking for themselves on such a topic, and there will be no end to their ideas and imaginative conjectures and illuminating flashes of comprehension. You will have no need to "point the moral"—they will arrive at it themselves, soon enough. And the "things invisible" to which they will have been "carried away" will be those selfsame doctrines that might otherwise be administered in a cut-and-dried form—doctrines concerning the life of the Church, which are really so closely and actually connected with the Humanity of Christ.

By this means the doctrines would reach the heart, bright and warm from their connection with the Light of the World, and infinitely more intelligible. They would, too, have received a *unity* otherwise lacking, while a real assimilation of such ideas as the Mystical Body, and membership of It, might make a difference to the whole future life of the child. It seems to me that there would be infinite scope for the teaching of Christian doctrine as *evolved*, so to speak, from a meditation on Our Lord, in which the children's own mental activity should have played the larger part.

And this leads us on towards the question of "subjectivity" in the religion of children. The close linking up of the Christian doctrine with the Humanity of Christ will not merely have made the doctrine more intelligible and more

* But this is only *an instance*; there are no end of other *aspects* of the gospel story that could give a kind of framework to the "meditation."

acceptable, *intellectually*—it will have awakened in the children that kind of loving enthusiasm which in Catholic terminology is called devotion. And here I cannot resist quoting St. Thomas again, for, speaking strictly from the point of view of theology, as he always does, he strongly upholds the "meditative method" as opposed to cut-and-dried instruction; and also brings us directly to the point of "devotion," explaining devotion in a way that should be carefully noted.

"A man arrives at the knowledge of truth," says St. Thomas, "by his own personal study, *and for this is required meditation.*"*

And again:

"The intrinsic cause of devotion on our part is meditation. . . . For, as we have said, *devotion is a certain act of the will by which a man gives himself promptly to the Divine Service.* All acts of the will, however, *proceed from consideration,* since the will's object is *good understood.* Hence St. Augustine says: '*The will starts from the understanding.*' Meditation must, then, be the cause of devotion inasmuch as it is from meditation that a man conceives the idea of giving himself up to God."†

What is religious instruction but an attempt to make the children "arrive at a knowledge of truth"? Truth once arrived at, known, *recognised as Truth,* will be believed (*faith*); will reassure the heart (*hope*); will awaken devotion (*charity*). Education, then, is going to be something very deep, very lasting, eternally worth while. To arrive at a *knowledge of Truth* . . . well, but St. Thomas says: "For *this* is required *meditation.*" If the truths of Faith are thus to enter into the children's growing personalities, affect their wills, last them all their lives, they must needs be taught to them in such a way as to awaken their mental activity, their love, their interest. Thus will they learn truly to understand them; and (while they meditate) surely God will give them the grace of "devotion"—that is, "the will prompt to action."

* "Summa," IIa, IIæ, Q. clxxx., Art. 3.
† "Summa," IIa, IIæ, Q. lxxxii., Art. 3.

III.—Childhood: The Divinely Established Criterion

THAT brings us directly to the question of the subjective aspect of religion; and it is *par excellence* the *practical* aspect. For what is the object of knowledge, of familiarity with ways and means, unless the knowledge affects action, and the ways and means carry the soul towards some definite goal? The action inspired by Catholic devotion is not just a sentimental kind of pastime to be indulged in by pious persons to whom it happens to "appeal." The activity of the Christian heart, the inner stirring which flowers in Christian virtues, has an intensely practical bearing, for instance, upon society. Leaving on one side for a moment the duty of each soul towards God, and the soul's own joy and its ultimate safety, we have to recognise, too, that men with *Catholic principles* have always been, and always will be, necessary to the well-being of humanity. From the Fall until the coming of Christ and the establishment of His Church, society in general had no well-being; and since then the well-being of society has been exactly proportionate to its ordering according to Catholic principles. So it has been in the past, and so it must be in the present and the future. And therefore the educator of children (especially in religion and morals) is the *maker of history*: "Who grasps the child grasps the future," as Francis Thompson said.

For Catholic principles, though unconsciously inherited by every modern man, and in some sort lived out by all those who are not out-and-out "Bolshevists" or out-and-out "butterflies," must be *truly assimilated* by individuals on a large scale, before such principles can really permeate society; and for this they must be understood, accepted, loved. Christian "mental training" cannot be gone in for like Pelmanism, or any of the other popular forms of modern psychology—there must be the true motive of love

of God, discipleship of Christ, personal desire for the highest. There must be, too, God's grace, which, though a gratuitous gift, requires man's co-operation before it can do its work.

Now, in grown-up people all this seeking after the highest, this spiritual Pelmanism called "the interior life," is often a somewhat self-conscious affair. Pious Christian people are inclined to make a considerable fuss about it (to themselves, that is, and to God). In the accumulated systems and methods of it there has come to be an air of artificiality, a touch of the unreality of all conventional things, which does not recommend it to the freer and more independent spirits, who perhaps need, more than the others, what it is supposed to give. It seems to them that *means* are often substituted for *ends,* and that the "way of perfection" has somehow got disconnected from life, and been put into a stuffy water-tight compartment, and become rather exclusive, like a first-class carriage.

That this fussy kind of interior life should exist in children is unthinkable, of course. But my point is that in children there is a very real interior life, of a very *simple* sort; that they do *think* about it and even meditate upon it; that in them there is a real effort to embody in themselves Christian principles. And what I specially want to say is that if this effort exists it is important that it be not crushed by misguided grown-up interference; more, that it should be assisted to develop along its own lines.

And there is one more point worth considering in this connection. Christ said: "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." And even more emphatically, taking to Him a child from the crowd: "Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Children, then, are the divinely established criterion. And if there is lack of sympathy between children and grown-ups in this matter, it is not the children we must blame.

And there *is* lack of sympathy. The truth of the matter is that children and grown-ups have gradually got miles and miles apart, and can scarcely talk the same language

where things that really matter are concerned—things like play and religion.

It wasn't so in the Middle Ages, simply because grown-ups were still child-like in heart. They still had the vivid faith, the simplicity, the truthful humility, the love and enthusiasm of children. Children and grown-ups were not two species of the same genus; they were the same species, only one a little less developed than the other. This is symbolised in the fact that in the outward matter of clothes there was not a species of clothes belonging exclusively to children (as there is now)—children wore the same hose and jerkins and houbelards and surcoats as their fathers, only on a smaller scale. They mingled with their grown-ups on a much more equal footing and more naturally. They certainly got whipped quite a lot; but then, nobody at all was exempt from corporal punishment in those days—it was not a special hardship of children.

What I mean about the "equal terms" is illustrated by stories such as that delightful one of the little boy St. Francis admitted to his Order, and who slept alongside St. Francis and tied his cord to St. Francis's cord so as to be awakened when the Saint rose up; for he wanted to know what St. Francis did when he went out in the dark. And he was rewarded—for he saw St. Francis at prayer—a truly marvellous sight; and as St. Francis carried him back to bed he had to promise not to tell until St. Francis should be dead. St. Benedict, too, in his Rule clearly contemplates little boy monks (*vide* "Benedictine Monachism," p. 325). I love to think of those boy monks taking their order of precedence according to their date of entry, and filing silently into the choir or refectory before many a grey-headed man. But it is nice to know that St. Benedict specially arranged for them to be able to let off steam, "on account of human nature, that it be not broken," a monk being told off to take them to the fields to play (*jocare*) for an hour. Also that they should be given as much food (including meat) as they wanted—eating frequently and not too much at a time. And what St. Benedict says about corporal punishment is very much worth noting.

There are other stories of children of long ago that make one feel they were on much simpler, more sympathetic terms with grown-up people. For instance, the boy Benignus, who made friends with St. Patrick, by putting flowers on him while he slept, and simply wouldn't leave him, and, in the end, succeeded him as Archbishop of Armagh. And the boy Victorinus, who, from the time he was ten, was St. Martin's constant companion until he grew into manhood. And the devotional practices of the grown-ups of those days must have seemed sensible to the children and worth joining in spontaneously, as may be gathered from the delightful little story of St. Columba:

"The little Columba was an apt pupil. It was his delight to accompany his master to the Church, there to listen to the chanting of the Divine Office; and so keen of ear and quick of memory was the boy, that he had learnt some of the Psalms by heart before he could spell them out in the Psalter—the lesson-book of every young reader of his time. Cruithnechan, himself, was unaware of this until one day, when he took the child with him on a visit to a brother priest near Derry. The two clerics went together to the Church to chant the Divine Office, and Columba, as was his wont, knelt to pray before the Altar. Now it came to pass that Cruithnechan lost his place, and was in great distress because he could not find it again. The Office came to a standstill, and the pause would have been a long one had not the boy's clear treble voice taken up the Psalm where the old man had halted, and chanted sweetly the alternate verses until the missing place was found."*

Can you imagine that happening to-day? No, small boys are not on those terms with their elders. But it seems to me that it is not the children who have changed with the centuries, but the grown-ups.

And in those days the child population must have, somehow, felt itself a much more important unit of society, more independent and influential than it does to-day, else how should it have embarked on that strange (and tragic)

* "St. Columba," by F. A. Forbes (Burns and Oates).

enterprise, the Children's Crusade? But if the children showed a tendency to assert their equality with their elders, no less did their elders tend, on occasion, to move on the children's level. How unthinkable, now, would be the strange ceremony of the Boy Bishop, and the other ways of observing the Feast of the Holy Innocents! And then at Easter *everybody* "played ball"—including monks and clerics, and even Bishops: it was the custom, and all entered into it with light-hearted gaiety. How pleased the children must have been! In fact, lots of the old customs performed regularly by the grown-ups are full of the delightful simplicity of the child-spirit—customs like that of giving the farm animals presents on the day a baby boy was born in the family (in memory, no doubt, of their being the first to welcome the Divine Little Brother born into the great human family). The grown-ups did all these things quite simply, as a matter of course. But grown-ups have changed a lot since those days.

The last part of this study will, therefore, be devoted to an attempt at discovering what sort of interior life is lived by children. For if we understand that, we shall be able to approach their religious instruction, first with a better understanding of what ways and means will be successful; and secondly, with more true sympathy—and sympathy is the golden key that fits every lock in the human heart.

IV.—The "Interior Life" of Children

CARDINAL NEWMAN gives a delightful little picture of the boys in a mediæval Benedictine school:

"While these oblates were but children, they were pretty much like other children; they threw a grace over the stern features of monastic asceticism and peopled the silent haunts of penance with a crown of bright innocent faces. 'Silence was pleased,' to use the poet's language, when it was broken by the cheerful and sometimes, it must be confessed, unruly voices of a set of school-boys."

Yes, they will always be cheerful and always noisy—thank God—however devout and recollected they may be at the proper times. And they will be intensely enthusiastic about whipping-tops, and frogs, and going to the Zoo; and they will thirst for the football news; and always eat a surprising amount; and hang on your words if you tell them an adventure story. But if you think all that is incompatible with the interior life, and with a real interest in "the way of perfection," and a real love of Our Lord, think over a pithy remark of one of the masters of the interior life—St. Teresa: "We should be much to be pitied if we could not seek God before being dead to the world."*

I believe all Catholic children have a real desire to be good Catholics, to avoid sin, to do as the Church bids, and to follow the customs of the Church. I believe a good many have intermittent desires to do things to please Our Lord. I believe some have a desire to become holy. But I know that very seldom will they so much as drop a hint to a grown-up that they have these desires. A child's heart is one of the most sensitive things created by God. He is very much afraid of having it roughly handled, or misunderstood or ridiculed, and so he wisely keeps it in its shell.

There are a few children whose hearts I have been

* In a letter.

privileged to have glimpses into. No child have I ever "pumped"—partly because it never occurred to me while we were together, and partly because I wouldn't abuse their confidence, or do anything which would so certainly put a stop to those spontaneous remarks that savour of perfect truthfulness.

I believe children go out of their way to "be good" much more than grown-ups realise; but I don't think they are much concerned with what the grown-ups think of this; nor do they make any self-conscious fuss to themselves and to God about what they have done. For the moment, it delights them—because Our Lord must have been so very pleased; and besides, it gives them a kind of interior glow, and they may even tell you about it. And this shows their real humility—because surely false humility is really camouflaged pride, and humility is only another name for *truth.* Similarly, they won't go out of their way to conceal their devotion, any more than they will do anything "to be seen of men." They have an instinctive knowledge of the truth tersely expressed by St. Augustine: "To be seen by men is not wrong; but to do things to be seen by men."

A certain boastfulness belongs to children at a certain age; but the very fact that it is confined to "natural" things is significant. A boy may tell you he is "the best cricketer down our street," or that he "never lets goals through": but he won't tell you he is the best boy in his street or never commits sin. He's got a kind of innate humility on such points.

When he takes upon himself a mortification, he does it with all his heart. I remember the *real disappointment* of a small boy into whose tea I carelessly put a lot of sugar when he had made an offering of sugarless tea all Lent. When he has made a resolution he will go through a lot to keep it. I know a small boy who has "made a note that he will go to Communion every Sunday." As he blows the organ, and there is not much time between the two Masses, and it is a good way home, and his home is the sort that does not have breakfast at all regularly or punctually, he often has to go fasting till midday.

If you tell children stories of the Saints, you will notice their intense keenness, not only about the various "adventures" that befell the Saint, but about his gradual development *into* a Saint. His actions, his motives, his perfections, his finally established holiness, awaken an absorbed interest; you see them making mental notes of this and that. Sometimes they make comments and ask questions. That they apply the ideas thus collected *to themselves,* I know. I remember once an extremely naughty boy of ten, of whom I had really given up hope, and whom I took aside to impose a severe punishment on—as a last resource—saying: "But I'm going to turn over a new leaf to-morrow." I saw he was deeply in earnest, and I suppose I looked *a question,* for he added, half shyly: "While you was telling that story about St. Edmund, I felt I *must.*"

Another equally hopeless character suddenly told me he was "just like the monk in the story"—*i.e.,* in Longfellow's "Legend Beautiful"—who left the Vision in his cell to perform a humble obedience; for he (the incorrigible boy) often left things that were a great pleasure to him to go to choir practice. But perhaps the most touching instance was that of a boy of twelve with a very marked vocation to the priesthood. Though it was the desire of his heart, he was too humble to think it *possible,* and so wouldn't speak of it. Even when a priest broached the matter to him, he would scarcely respond. At last, however, something gave him confidence, and he admitted (first to his mother and afterwards to me) what this was. He had read in the preface to some book of stories of the Saints "that people wrote books telling about the Saints to show us that men and women had *really* become good like that; and that there is *a chance for us;* if we try hard and God gives us grace. It said the Saints show that it isn't *impossible*: because, once, they were ordinary people, and yet they became Saints at the finish." Now he is spending his life trying to "get enough grace" to be a priest some day, and, incidentally, working very hard at his books.

Another and much less "recollected" small boy showed me, once, by a passing remark, how clearly he realised the

really supernatural character of the priest and the religious. "Priests," he said, "take after Our Lord, and Nuns take after Our Lady." It was a simple remark, but it held a deep meaning.

And then, with regard to the Sacraments, often they show a very deep reverence for what (all things considered) might have become a matter of mere routine. A number of small boys had been to Confession together, one Saturday. On Sunday morning they turned up for Mass in good time. The priest was still hearing Confessions. "I want to go," whispered one to me. "But you went last night," I whispered back. "Yes," he said, "but I forgot myself again." And so he passed in front of all his comrades and entered the confessional to make sure his heart was pure enough for the supreme honour of receiving Our Lord.

Then there was Harry—a poor little physically retarded scrap of humanity, with a squint due to neglected measles, the son of a thriftless Protestant woman and a once Catholic "corfee-stall man." He once explained to me that he was a convert (a "convict," he *said* !) and had been baptised a year before. I met him one weekday returning gaily from church, where he had been to Communion, he said, because it was that day last year he had been baptised. It was to him a day of far more import than his birthday.

Faith and hope notoriously belong to children; but I am constantly struck with their wonderful *charity*. They very rarely calumniate another boy, they never backbite, and if one is heard "telling tales," he soon gets told to "shut up." Swiftly, generously they forgive; patiently they bear with repeated petty injustices and unkindnesses from grown-ups, and never bear a grudge. The good things of life must seem tremendously desirable when you are awaking for the first time to a realisation of their existence; and yet the many, many children who have no chance of tasting them—how courageously they follow St. Jerome's advice and "make a virtue of necessity," and never grumble or repine ! A true lesson in detachment !

Of course, there is a great charm about their *unconsciousness,* which one would hesitate to dispel. And yet,

to meditate *objectively* on the Christian virtues; on how much Our Lord likes to see them in us; on their dependence on and increase by grace; on the worth-whileness of real effort and perseverance in becoming the "perfect soldier of Jesus Christ" that Confirmation was meant to make us: all this might be done with infinite advantage—an advantage not so much apparent, perhaps, in the immediate present, but likely to establish firmly rooted habits which shall withstand the storm of adolescence, and grow even on the dead-level of grown-up life, with its lack of enthusiasm and its bondage of conventionality.

The children's manner of following the way of perfection consists (metaphorically) in a series of hops, skips, and jumps (like their way of proceeding along any road). Little actions done out of love of Our Lord, or from a spontaneous charity; simple acts of love; good Communions; checks on self, when temper suggests swearing or hitting; patient self-control that conceals a disappointment and fights back the tears: all these, like disconnected hops and jumps, get them along. They are worth much, for, as St. Thomas says: "*Habits* are generated by *acts*, and then, when the habit is formed, we act still more perfectly." But children are logically minded, constructive, fond of making plans and carrying them out: a rather more synthetic view of "pleasing Our Lord," if put to them just right, would probably appeal as strongly as Baden-Powell's synthetic scheme for becoming a perfect Scout has been taken to heart by the boys of the world. *They* not only learn the ten Scout Laws by heart, but read and re-read the little explanations, and meditate upon them. And, after all, the Scout virtues would have to be included in any scheme of spiritual perfection for children, because they are just as much a part of Our Lord's Personality as the others (though, alas! not always so well practised by pious people).

As to how the subject should be tackled is a matter that depends on the personality and individual aptitudes and tastes of the grown-up. Stories of the Saints, with a kind of camouflaged commentary on their motives and expedients, is a good "method"; and, in any case, illustra-

tions from the lives of the Saints are *essential.* (By the way, *reading aloud* lives of the Saints, even those written for children, is of little use.) But some definite *thinking about* the virtue in question, or about the fact of the "interior life" in general, will also be necessary if the children are to have that real devotion which St. Thomas defines as an "act of the will by which a man gives himself promptly to the Divine Service," and which, he says, is produced by meditation.

And so if the children of this generation can be helped to grow up with a reasoned understanding of Christian doctrine and Christian life, and a will moved to devotion, the men and women of the future will have a more fruitful understanding of the Catechism formula which says: "God made me to love Him and serve Him in this life, and to be happy with Him for ever in the next;" and will, by God's grace, be "the salt of the earth" which shall preserve society and bring mankind at last into the joy of life everlasting.

V.—The Imagination in Religion

(i.)

IN religion, as in all else that has to be accomplished in this life, there is an End, a Way, and a Means. God, and the immediate and ultimate joy of life in Him, are, of course, the End. The Way is the *Catholic life* devised and made possible by Christ our Lord. The foregoing chapters of this little book have been about the Way—about the importance of a life of devotion in addition to accurate knowledge of doctrine, and exact observance; because, when Our Lord said "*I* am the *Way*," He meant it literally; meant it as a blessed antithesis to the multitudinous ways of Jewish formalism.

But in order to be really practical we have to get down to *the Means*. And the real short cut to devising the right means is to have a clear comprehension of how children's minds *work*.

I have to admit that I have never had time to read Professor James, or any of the other people who explain all about psychology, having always been so much occupied in taking small boys to camp, and telling stories to small girls, and inventing games and making up plays. But one thing I have always found—that the only way to manage a crowd of children (or *one* child, for that matter) so that everyone concerned was both good and happy (the grown-ups included) was to devise and organise everything purely and simply according to the way the minds of children work. And more and more I have come to realise one thing, that everything depends on the *imagination*.

The remaining chapters of this book will, therefore, try to show how the *means* of bringing the children into the right *way* that shall lead them to the desired *end*, is chiefly a matter of fitting our methods to the God-given faculty of imagination; not only allowing for and making use of the imagination, but training it to perform all that it is

obviously meant to do in the mental, moral and spiritual life of man.

People often speak thoughtlessly as if it were a misfortune to have a strong and active imagination. "An imaginative child," they say, with a note of pity or disparagement. Things like fear of the dark, fanciful terrors, juvenile "crime," idle day-dreaming and so on, are often put down to "the imagination" when really the imagination is only revealing symptoms of some further cause, such as a physical condition of the nervous system, or bad digestion, or lack of occupation, or boyish high spirits that have not found a proper outlet. Here, then, we shall treat the imagination simply as a force for *good.*

(ii.)

The word *imagination* is really a very ambiguous word. I don't mean *vague*—it isn't—but it has so many definite meanings that it is hard to know which is intended, when the word is used in conversation. Before we can arrive at any idea of the place of imagination even in secular education, we must decide which meaning of the word we have in mind.

Scholastic philosophy used the word a great deal. What the schoolmen meant by the word was the kind of *mental picture* by which the human brain grasps an idea. They held that all ideas that come into the mind begin as a picture of some sort. They were not concerned with the place and importance of "visualisation" (as it is now called), or with the varying degrees in which it is possessed by individuals, but merely with the fact of visualisation as part of the normal mental process. Let us, then, for the moment, limit the meaning of the word "imagination" to *visualisation,* and try and arrive at some idea of the importance of this faculty in relation to religious instruction. What the schoolmen meant was something common to all human beings, an essential part of the process of grasping an intelligible truth. But visualisation, used in the sense of *mental picture,* varies enormously in individuals. With

some people the picture of a remembered scene will be as vivid as reality, in colour, movement, detail. These pictures rise spontaneously to the mind at the mention of an incident, or can be recalled at will. Memories of early days are as bright as more recent ones. Other people, again, possess the faculty in less degree : the scene will be dull, lacking in colour or movement or detail; or it may fade away if the attention is focussed upon it. It may require mental effort to call up a scene, and the past tends to fade right away. There are even people who possess practically no power at all of calling up realistic mental pictures. The faculty is commonest and at its best with children, then with women, and it is at its weakest with men.* Those who once possessed it have been known to lose it, especially scientists and other thinkers who have concentrated long on abstract ideas. (Darwin admitted he had lost practically all power of visualisation.)

Now, people possessing this power in what one might call the *passive* way, can generally make use of it *actively*, as well. That is, if a scene is described to them, or they read a description in a book, they can *form* a mental picture of their own, as clear as reality. More : they can *imagine* a scene (or a person) for themselves, without any description or other assistance. The brain gets active, and pictures something that has never been seen in reality, or that has never even taken place at all.

Now, it is this power that education cannot afford to ignore in children. Most children possess it in some degree (generally fairly developed, I believe). The possession of a "vivid imagination" is a very great help to grasping such subjects as history. Why, history becomes just a great panorama, every new scene or incident a vivid, coloured "living picture," fascinating, unforgettable. Historical personages are not just names, but real people, each with his own personal appearance. Centuries don't go by numbers, but by the way people dress and behave and fight. The very names of battles have a thrilling picture belonging to them. The same with geography and poetry—

* This is stated in Sir Francis Galton's detailed examination of the subject, in "Enquiries into Human Faculty."

especially if you let geography be descriptive stories of other lands, and not merely the names of bays and capes and heights of mountains; and if it is Shakespeare and Scott and Tennyson you "take," and "take" them in the right way.

The imagination, then, is a real asset. But if children are using this faculty, how important it is for the teacher not only to take advantage of it, but to ensure that the *right* use is made of it. If history (for instance) is taught without any of what one might call the "local colour of the century," the probability is the children will get the local colour all wrong—for pictures of some sort they most certainly will call up in their minds the moment a scene or event is mentioned.

It should be the first concern of the teacher, therefore, to create a correct and beautiful picture in the minds of the children, of the period or scene or person or country. Once that is done, facts and characters and events will fit in naturally. Think of the awful anachronisms there must be in the historical mental pictures of the average child! And pictures are very hard—almost impossible—to correct. If you had once seen the Battle of Waterloo being fought by men-at-arms with eighteen-foot pikes, and hosts of archers, as at Agincourt, no mere facts learnt later on would easily alter the picture.

To be able to tell a story vividly is, then, a very important accomplishment for a teacher; and the more "local colour" he can introduce, the more truly will he be *educating* the children, and the more he will delight them—for there are few things a child enjoys more than flights of imagination. And if the teacher lacks the power of painting vivid word-pictures, there are always picture-books—which are, nowadays, almost all that could be desired. It is not so much the individual pictures conveyed to the children by the teacher that matter, as the endless series of mental pictures to which they give a lead.

If, then, this faculty exists, and is of so much importance in secular education, how much more important must it be in religious instruction!

I remember, once, questioning some small boys on Bible history. "And what," I said, "did Naaman give Giezi?" —"Some money in two bags, an' two pairs o' trouses," was the prompt reply. Did that answer, I wondered, give the clue to that small boy's mental pictures of Old Testament stories? Did he visualise "Namaan, general of the army of the King of Syria," as a khaki-clad brass-hat? Was Eliseus the counterpart of the Diocesan Examiner, or the Bishop who officiated at the last Confirmation?

Well, never mind what Naaman was like—it is of little spiritual import. But what of the New Testament stories? Had this boy any kind of realistic impressions? Probably they were a strange jumble, indistinct because in many ways incongruous. But, after all, *that* doesn't matter so very much so long as one or two figures stand out in the mental vision with clearness as living realities. What mental picture have the children got of Our Lord?

That brings us directly to the subject of pictures and "objects of devotion." Remember, though to you and me they are merely symbols, to the children they are objects that impress the mind, and are to be *believed* in as verisimilitudes. Have you never heard them speak in all good faith about this and that "photo of Our Lord"? Remember, we live in an age of realism. Are those appalling little cards printed in Germany likely to assist what St. Paul calls "the eyes of your heart" to see well the elder Brother Who should be to them hero, beloved friend, embodiment of all beauty? Will they not, rather, tend to create the *wrong* kind of impression, much as the words of the hymn, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild" libel the Hero-King of the human race?

We cannot hope all at once to institute a reform in the matter of objects of devotion (though here is a field of activity for some zealous apostle!), but we can counteract the regrettable influence. We can, first, by our words, create a right kind of impression of Our Lord's character and attributes (and especially with the very little ones, where we are possibly making *first impressions*). Next, we can assiduously avoid giving them the wrong kind of little

pictures, and keep our eyes open for the right kind. Then, we can make an effort to get beautiful and true and life-like pictures of Our Lord, Our Lady, and the Saints to hang upon the class-room walls. Finally, we can provide books with the right kind of pictures. For instance, the pictures in Fr. Roche's "Child's Prayers to Jesus" are good. I remember a priest once telling me that he gave those prayers to the children to say as their penances. He produced from beneath his cassock a copy of the little cloth-bound book.

"You can get paper copies for sixpence," I remarked. "Ah, but they haven't got *pictures,*" he said; and I put him down as the right kind of confessor for children. After (no, no, before !) saying the penance they would, of course, look at the picture, and so there would take place a meditation—brief, indeed; but, then, doesn't St. Benedict's Rule recommend *brief* prayer?

It is said, sometimes, that you can't expect any mental prayer from children. But I am not so sure. I could much more easily believe that you can't expect any mental prayer from quite a lot of grown-ups. Probably the imagination has a lot to do with mental prayer; and I don't mean just "composition of place" in formal meditation. I believe children visualise Our Lord when they pray.

Possibly, too much vocal prayer tends to take away the reality of the people to whom it is addressed, because real people, like your mother, for instance, want to be *talked* to, naturally. A small boy once asked me, with that earnestness that reveals a real desire to know: "When I want to ask Our Lady for something, *must* I say a 'Hail, Mary,' or can I just ask?"

Every child should (and probably does) possess a mental picture of Our Lord, which is quite independent of any "holy picture" or plaster image. And surely this mental picture *is* Our Lord—with him because he wants Him.

I have kept, so far, to the concept of Our Lord only; but there are many other spiritual ideas that wait upon the imagination. Angels, for instance.

(iii.)

During the whole of my childhood I was biased against angels. By what? By the pictures of stout ladies in pale pink and pale blue dresses, with stiff, goose-feather wings, and much fluttering ribbon. They had long, golden hair, and flew in unnatural, affected attitudes, and I hated them. It is only by a mental effort that I can now shut out the old concept of angels, and feel a proper devotion for the beautiful spiritual beings that I have at last persuaded myself they really must be.

How many children share my earlier impression?

Worse still. These golden-haired ladies, with a dampish cloud, a stiff ray of light and a couple of harps, are apparently a sample of Heaven. No wonder if children are not always enthusiastic about Heaven. But sometimes we make the matter even worse. A crowd of small boys and I were once having one of those spontaneous conversations about things spiritual that sometimes happen all unsought, in quite unsuitable moments and places. This time it was about Heaven. We spoke of all meeting again there, some day. A shy little boy, sitting on the floor at my elbow, murmured, "But shall we *know* each other?" "Garn, silly! o' *course* we shall," someone instructed him, with kindly-meant emphasis.

"But my mum said we'd all be *angels,* like, and I wouldn't know her," persisted the small boy.

What a piteous picture of Heaven! Let's make sure they have a better conception than *that.*

One of the small boys had died; and as we came back sadly from the funeral and someone had remarked, "Well, anyhow, he was lucky to be buried on St. Peter and Paul's," one boy suddenly exclaimed, "And, oh, Miss, he's lucky, 'cos in Heaven he'll be able to play *all* musical instruments!" It shows that pictures create a very real impression, for bells, trumpets, violins, harps, and even tambourines *do* figure very constantly in our celestial art!

It shows, too, how much *can* be done by pictures and

representations. St. Francis understood the art of teaching when he invented the Christmas crib, and his successors carried on his ideas with the Stations of the Cross. Our mediæval ancestors were wise when they beautified their churches with "storied windows." The same idea underlies the use of mystery plays in the Middle Ages. And yet there are a few dangers in all this that need guarding against. The first is this: pictures must not be allowed to create a stereotyped conventionality about things that are vital realities. The teacher must aim at imparting a realistic idea, which outdoes the artificiality of the picture. I remember once having supper in the refectory of a boarding-school. I was sitting with a lot of small girls to whom I had just been telling stories of the Saints in (I suppose) a successfully realistic way. Silence was imposed during the meal, but one of the small girls signified to me that she had something important and necessary to ask. I lent an attentive but depreciatory ear.

"Can you *see* the Saints' haloes while they are alive?" queried the small girl. The realism of my telling and the conventionality of the pictures had raised a difficulty. It was a hard thing to explain in a hurried whisper!

The other danger in indiscriminate visualisation is that of wrong, inadequate notions of *spiritual* ideas which do not admit of mental pictures. For instance, the First and Third Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

One Sunday some small boys imparted to me the entertaining news that during the Children's Mass a dove had got into the church and flown round and round and hovered over the altar, "just like the Holy Ghost."

"Miss," added a wondering small boy, "p'raps it *was* the Holy Ghost! Wouldn't it be wonderful . . . ?"

There was a charming *naïveté* about the remark, and yet there was something a little saddening about it, too. His mental picture of the Holy Ghost as a dove hinted that he had no real grasp of the idea of the indwelling Spirit. What had his Confirmation meant? There had been no hovering dove at that. And yet it would be quite easy to give so vivid an impression of the unseen yet moving,

vitalising *being* of the Holy Ghost that the crude idea of a dove would be improved upon. Our Lord gave us a beautiful instance of how to do it. In some translations of the Gospel, St. John iii. 8 is given thus: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit"; and it has been suggested that it was not to a house that Nicodemus came by night, but to the garden where Jesus loved to spend the night in prayer; and that it was from the sound of the whispering olive-trees above their heads that Our Lord drew the simile which so perfectly suggested the action of the Holy Ghost. Be that as it may, it provides us with a case in point: imagination need not be exclusively mental *pictures*: a child, told to think of the Holy Spirit as something like the whispering of the summer wind in the garden at night—*unseen,* and yet so truly *there*—would be using his imagination, without much obscuring the spiritual concept. The *aptness* of simile is a most important point in speaking to children, just because they are so vividly imaginative, and retain a mental impression so persistently.

But, after all, our words, pictures, statues, and the like are only the "instrumental causes" of the mental imagery that forms the spiritual notions of children. Abbot Vonier has wisely said, "God's grace is as ready to help our thinking as it is prompt to support our acting,"* and since children think mostly in pictures, may we not suppose that God the Holy Spirit paints what is beautiful and true upon the pure surface of minds untarnished by the world? Surely He corrects our blunders, and does for the children all that we long to do, answering our "prayer of desire" as He answered St. Paul's prayer for his beloved children: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making commemoration of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation, in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart enlightened. . . ."†

* "The Christian Mind," p. 30. † Eph. i. 16-18.

(iv.)

If visualisation holds so important a place in spiritual concepts, yes, and even in mental prayer, have we no indication of its existence in the spiritual life of the Saints?

That is rather a wide as well as a subtle question, and would demand a careful examination of the writings of the Saints; and even then no really satisfactory conclusion would be arrived at, because most of the Saints wrote little or nothing; and especially the imaginative Saints, like St. Francis, were not writers. And those who *did* write were mostly mystics like St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, whose spiritual mentalities are too far removed to be of very much assistance in such an examination. Besides, the Saints are rarely autobiographical in any very subjective and revealing way; and they lived before the days when the public was so much interested in its own and everyone else's psychology, so that it didn't strike them to explain whether or no they visualised.

There is, however, one man who, I think, throws some light on the question. True, he is not a canonised saint, but he is a saintly contemplative belonging to ages of Faith, and may be taken as a representative of his type—the Dominican artist, Fra Angelico. His art stands alone, between the exuberance of the Renaissance and the crudity of the Middle Ages.

The probability is that he was an artist before he felt called to be a friar; and that he entered Religious Life not to renounce his artistic genius but to consecrate it. All through his religious life he worked hard at perfecting his execution, and all the time he was keenly "alive to the progress in technical matters which was going on around him, and sympathetically open to contemporary influences of various kinds." He studied classical art; he used human models, he moved with the artistic trend of his time. All this means that he was capable (unlike his mediæval predecessors) of revealing to us, in his art, what was in his mind. The mediæval artists lacked the necessary technique.

They were often limited by their media—tapestry, stained-glass, stone, wood, flat tints on parchment. Besides, the convention of *symbolism* dominated religious art, giving it unreality, and replacing the more subtle methods of revealing the meaning and idea in the picture.

Fra Angelico had moved on far beyond the mediæval artists from whom he was not so very far removed in time; and yet he scarcely belongs to the Renaissance proper. In fact he stands alone. There is something quite distinctive about him. Perhaps the secret is this: his mind was the mind of a contemplative; his life the life of a saint. Consciously, deliberately, he painted what the eyes of his heart had seen. Always his soul was contemplating the Humanity of Christ, and his pictures (especially the frescoes of San Marco) are meditations—but meditations in *form* and *colour*. They are more intimately revealing than the pictures of any other artist I know. They are full of a delicate, transcendent beauty (especially in the representations of Christ), and yet full of a realism that neglects no shade of expression, no detail of a scene. They are full, too, of originality of thought; departing, as they do, from conventional tradition, and making no use whatever of symbolic device. Fra Angelico used models and worked by the laws and rules of art, but always the vision of his soul shines through—it is *that* he is painting. San Marco, with its quiet cloisters looking out on the green quadrangle and great cedar-tree, is an unforgettable place. In each little bare cell, once occupied by a friar, there is a fresco on the wall. Fra Angelico is said to have spoken of these as "windows into Heaven," showing that by him they were indeed intended as helps to his brothers' spiritual vision.

The point I am trying to make is this. Fra Angelico was a saintly man with sufficient technical skill to express himself perfectly, and yet no mere enthusiast in art for art's sake. The artist in him never dominated the saint in him. Hence he is perhaps the only man in the history of the Church who has been able to reveal to us the mind-pictures of the contemplative. In this he is a piece of psychological evidence. From him I think we may deduce

much about the minds of the Saints. And between the minds of the Saints and the minds of the children I think there is much in common, because Our Lord said, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." My plea, therefore, is, let us remember that spiritual visualisation is a very real part of religion. Let our religious instruction make use of it, and develop it. Let us guard against letting it become atrophied by constant neglect; still more, let us guard against its being actively harmed by the use of misleading and inadequate pictures. Let us remember that a beautiful and ever-present vision is better than a word-perfect knowledge of the Catechism.

VI.—The Creative Imagination

(i.)

AFTER all, "visualisation" is only one of the *faculties* of the imagination (so to speak); it is what the eyes are to our outward consciousness. In the natural order of things it would be true to say that the most important function of the imagination is its *creative* power. Anyone who ever created anything, imagined it first—whether it was the Parthenon frieze, or "Hamlet," or the first steam-engine, or York Minster, or a big business with a branch in every town, or aeroplanes, or the Benedictine Order. Things don't just happen by accident. Nor can rational-minded people like Catholics bring themselves to believe that from the days of chaos there has been a continual chain of coincidences, miraculous in their opportuneness, producing a world-evolution all on its own, and apart from anyone's great dream and subsequent guiding watchfulness. No; from the days when God said "Let there be light," every good thing that has come into being has been the result of some dreamer dreaming and then setting to work.

Since this is a universal law that ranges from big-scale things down to the little doings of our own lives, we cannot ignore it and then expect the proper results.

Every one of the children you teach Catechism to is, as a poet once put it, "the master of his fate, the captain of his soul." If it is your object to help him to become that most splendid of things, a Catholic sound through and through, a house built on the rock, and utterly unshaken by the floods of circumstances that beat upon it, you will have to capture his creative imagination. A thing like that—like a true Catholic—doesn't just evolve all unconsciously out of a chaotic mass of doctrinal formulæ and unreasoned habits, and conventional respectability and sacramental grace. A true Catholic only comes into existence when a human soul uses its imagination and schemes

out a system of *doing things* (like using the Sacraments), and, perhaps, too, *being* something (like some good Catholic personally known; or like the Saints, or, best of all, like Christ).

Of course, that sort of thing requires from beginning to end the assistance of *grace*. But the process doesn't use a special set of spiritual faculties; it uses just the same work-aday faculties that come into play in the rest of life. If the imagination is so important a faculty in spiritual development, it should be educated and exercised in its more natural capacity to make it ready for its higher uses, and also brought into play in the things of religion from the very first. That is why a Catholic teacher (or parent) needs to think about the child's Christian soul even during ordinary work and play, and to understand its natural soul during the Catechism class. Here, then, are a few ideas on the development of the creative imagination.

(ii.)

Do you ever meditate on your own childhood? It is worth doing. Perhaps, after a little thought, you could remember what were the really happiest, most contented moments of your life. I don't mean special holidays and outings: I mean what, in your ordinary, uneventful life kept you happy; gave you food for contented thought while some dull lesson was going on; made you hurry with the learning of your dates and tables that you might be free to go back to—what?

Looking back on my own childhood, it seems to me that I found the greatest contentment and enthusiasm in what I suppose grown-ups would call my hobbies, but which to me were the chief business of my life: such things as my small square garden, where flowers and radishes and potatoes grew serenely side by side with no class distinctions; and like my guinea-pigs, and the study of wild birds, and (indoors) painting.

Since I grew up I've seen the same in other children over other matters.

What, you may say, have hobbies to do with the imagination, and what is their bearing on religious instruction?

Well, first, the chief point about hobbies is not that they "keep the children out of mischief" (there should be nothing merely negative in children's lives), nor that they should develop mere dexterity or concentration. The chief point is that they provide something concrete to dream about, and the opportunity to work out the dream, to put it into practical effect. That is desirable, partly that the child may be happy; but also because it means that he will acquire the habit of having ideas and working them out practically; and this, starting in the small, restricted sphere of childhood's life, will grow and widen with his development and change of circumstances, so that when he reaches manhood it will be a happy, busy, interested manhood, where a desire to work will be a real motive power—and not to work as a slave, but as a man, an artist, a creator.

Hobbies, then, make the child practical: and the only really practical people are the people with creative imaginations.

Now switch off this whole psychological tendency into the sphere of education. Picture children as keen over their lessons as their hobbies; and not only interested and attentive at the moment (because the teacher is being interesting) but dreaming about the school interests out of school-time, scheming out ideas with regard to them *because the school interests make a real demand on their creative imaginations.*

Is it possible? Well, all I know is that thinking of the many children I have known intimately out of school, I can remember one and another talking enthusiastically about things in school—*sometimes.* It was always when the imagination had been appealed to. Obviously, educational enthusiasm is desirable, especially if it makes for practical developments in the child. And what of religion—which is the only thing that *really* matters in life? Switch off the whole idea of the creative imagination into the spiritual sphere this time. Ah, now we've got to the real core of the matter! Religion should live in that part of

the child where hobbies and interesting lessons live; where there are day-dreams of the sort that get worked out; where formation of character along practical lines is going on—in short, where the imagination is at work. Of course, it is the child's *home* that should see to this. But most of the homes won't. . . .

(iii.)

Have you ever studied that so-called science called "comparative religion" that was an intellectual fashion a few years back? It is rather interesting; but the chief thing it shows is that the founders of the various cults (however lofty in idea) did not, like the Founder of the Catholic religion, "know what was in man." So that the priesthood that kept the thing going had to make use of the lowest impulses of the human heart, like fear, superstition, a blind following of tradition, a sheep-like tendency of going with the crowd, ambition among the more enlightened, the passion for caste, the mysticism of the senses, worked on equally by the horrible and the beautiful.

Christ "knew what was in man"—the good as well as the bad—and formed a religion that would really fit him; and especially that would fit children easily, and grow up with them into the heights and depths that are merely the logical development of the simple and fundamental things grasped in childhood. If you read the Gospels (especially St. Luke and St. John) with this idea of Christ's intimate knowledge of human psychology, you will see what I mean. In the Gospels He mostly lays down principles and axioms; but later, when the Catholic Church had come into being, He guided her to devise a hundred details that make her religion exactly fit the human heart, and make the most of its good points, and counteract its bad tendencies. The Catholic religion is simply full of little imaginative and practical devices as well as the great practical sacramental system. Besides the sacramentals, the special devotions, the commandments of the Church, the liturgy, shrines, pilgrimages, feasts, concrete demands in the way of special

virtues, there are the lives of the Saints—a rich store of imaginative detail; and the Religious Orders, each embodying a special aspect of spiritual life, each representing a poignant moment of the Church's history—the very army that was mobilised in that crisis, and is there still, a kind of armament kept up to ensure peace on earth to men of good will, in spite of the menace of the world, the flesh, and the devil on our frontiers. How easy it should be to have the children all enthusiasm about this wonderful religious system of ours—so full of things to do, of plans to scheme out, of wonderful possibilities to be imagined, of actual little personal battles, or collective crusades to be fought! What a tragedy if routine, or red-tape, or any of the other ills that flesh is heir to, should somehow create the impression that religion is dull.

It all comes back to a personal *imagining* and *doing*. Children who have somehow discovered the secret for themselves are the most enthusiastic of Catholics. I have, in other articles, quoted many instances. Here are a few more.

(iv.)

One of my small friends ardently desired to serve Mass. He was a rather rough customer, and not yet in the class at school where Mass-serving was taught. He worried me continually till I got him a book and told him the pronunciation. He was a boy who found learning very hard indeed: football was his real vocation. And I was very obstinate about proper pronunciation—for instance, I simply wouldn't let him call "*beatam,*" in the *Confiteor,* "be-at-'em," "like the other boys." For weeks and weeks he worked away in his spare time, always carrying the little book about with him; and even during school football when he was in goal, and there was nothing doing down his end, he would take out the book and go over it a bit. He would call in and "say it over" to me while I had breakfast—and for many days we fought with *ad utilitatem* and *totiusque Ecclesiae suæ sanctæ.*

At last came the splendid day when I said he was ready,

and the priest took him on. Every day he would be there, well before half-past seven; and he kept a little pair of black sand-shoes of his own in the sacristy, to change into, because his "clogs" were too noisy, and he thought the red felt bedroom slippers kept in the sacristy not sufficiently dignified. One thing worried him—that he might not wake up in time, for no one got up *that* early in his house; and there was no clock. The only way of knowing if it was time to get up was to hang out of the window in the chill grey dawn and call to the first passer-by, "Hi, mister, tell us the time!" And so he was really happy when I gave him a cheap alarm clock for Christmas, and he could sleep in peace, sure of being up in time.

Month after month he stuck to it, always coming in to me on the way to school, and talking of that morning's Mass and any little thing that had occurred at it, as if it was his chief interest in life. (I noticed he always said "we," meaning himself and the priest, when discussing Church matters!)

I remember his joy when one day he announced breathlessly, "I've served a' Abbot's Mass!" "Are you sure?" I said. "Yes," he said. "You see, first I *knew* he was a *monk,* 'cos of his habit and the funny way his hair was cut—*you* know. Then I saw his *ring.* So after, I whispered to Father, was it a' Abbot? And Father said yes. And the Abbot let me kiss his ring. . . ." It had been a glorious experience, evidently, and quite worth arriving late in school and having his hard, lean little palm caned.

And note that this boy isn't a boy who means to be a priest. He means to be a jockey, and is practical enough to have decided that his best chance is to get a job as stable-boy as soon as he leaves school!

He has another enthusiasm—St. Antony, and a "little altar" he has made, a shrine of St. Antony and the Sacred Heart.

The family lives in one room, mostly—an awful room, in a house already condemned by the authorities. Dan's little altar is nailed on the wall. It is draped with old bits of a lace curtain, and he takes them down and washes and

irons them every few days. It has little statues and candles and vases and pictures. He used to try hard to keep flowers always on it; and his eyes used to grow bright if he saw that someone had sent me flowers from the country, and he thought he might get a few. Twice "the black cat from downstairs" pulled down the altar and smashed all that was smashable. But each time he perseveringly put it up again, and restored all he could. One of his "little 'uns" climbed up once and tore the pictures. That was hard, too. The little altar meant a lot to him. He once got the chance of choosing a present for himself up to about five shillings. The friend who promised it thought it would be a knife or cricket-ball or such-like. But when I consulted Dan as to what it should be, he thought a little while, and then said (half shyly): "Please could it be a statue of the Sacred Heart as wouldn't break, because of the black cat downstairs?" Happily, Messrs. Burns and Oates produced the very thing—ten inches high, strong metal that looked like silver, and only 4s. 6d. It was a great relief: you must have strong objects of devotion in that sort of environment—same as you must have strong faith and strong motives. And—yes—a strong imagination that can perceive the mysteries of our Faith, and the beautiful possibilities in ourselves, when streets and houses are dirty and miserable, and language is blasphemous and obscene, and motives are of the lowest, and the wicked flourish, and the little ones of Christ are often hungry, and, to all outward appearances, even religion is rather drab and wearying.

VII.—The Idea of Being Something

(i.)

IF it takes creative imagination to produce anything worth having, from a little garden-plot or a scrapbook, up to a regular and full observance of the Catholic religion, still more does it take imagination to *be* something. You have to possess a mental grasp of the thing, conceive a desire to be it, and then imagine yourself it; and afterwards follow up the long process of development—the imagination always keeping ahead with a bright picture of the stage not yet reached.

Everyone goes through life doing things, and making things, and using his imagination about it; but not everybody has a conscious vocation. Especially in these days the vocational instinct seems very fast asleep. It was not so in the Middle Ages. Then, everybody *was* something. Think of Chaucer's cheery crowd of Canterbury Pilgrims—they were each something very definite. As to the working people, they, too, *were* something, and not merely *did* something—the Guilds saw to that. Perhaps it is unpractical to sigh after those happy days—the present industrial nightmare has swamped things so thoroughly. But there is just one way of escape from the soul-killing dead-level of modern existence, with the cheap excitements that are its only stimulus; just one path that leads up into the sunny realms of reality and "perfect joy." There is just one vocation open to every man and woman and child in the world; and it has been open to them ever since the days of Pentecost. I mean the possibility of *being a Catholic.*

It has got to be realised as a vocation, and realised so from the very dawn of reason. And that takes imagination. Each child must understand what it means to be a Catholic; must consciously want to be one; must imagine himself becoming one in the fullest sense (with, of course, every-

thing in life correlated up), and must be working out the realisation of this dream. To get this done is, of course, the work of Catholic education. It happens in more cases than one might suppose, I think, especially when the children come from good Catholic homes. Still, there must be a great many children who finish the bit of the Catechism called "The Christian's Rule of Life" without ever having personally and enthusiastically embraced the idea of being a Catholic, and of going through with it, come what may, to the end.

As in the matter I wrote of in the last chapter—doing things—I think a great deal depends on the proper and right natural development of the mind and character in that direction. It is, therefore, worth thinking out the vocational idea in education, both in the natural and spiritual sphere: and here again the natural leads up to, is the preparation for, the spiritual.

(ii.)

Perhaps the Scout Movement is the most perfect example of the vocation-idea, outside religion. That this idea appeals to the children is demonstrated by the amazing way the Scouts, Cubs, and Guides suddenly sprang into being some twelve years ago, with no organising, no advertising, no financing, no official backing, and in spite of a good deal of popular ridicule, and high-brow criticism, and narrow religious prejudice. Only those who have intimate knowledge of the life of a troop (a troop run by a man with the Scout spirit himself, that is, and the gift for inspiring it in the boys) can know the transforming effect upon the characters of the children by this very simple scheme of character-training through joy, service, and practical activity. Educationists of all sorts might do worse than study this great discovery, and, even without actually moulding their schemes upon it, at least adopt its root-idea, and use some of its methods of teaching, discipline and character-training.

But I do not quote scouting so much as a pattern of

how religion might be taught, but as an instance of how natural training prepares the individual for supernatural life. I would say, without qualification, that, among Catholic boys, a really good Cub would find it infinitely easier to grasp what it means to grow up into a really good Catholic, and would have more will to do it than a boy who was not a Cub; and that a really good Scout of sixteen or seventeen would, *ipso facto, be* a really good Catholic.

But apart from scouting, there are many other ways in which the vocational instinct could be appealed to with advantage. For instance, games-clubs. People are already beginning to realise the educational importance of games as character-training and discipline of the true sort; also they are beginning to realise the real necessity for joy, healthy vigorous happiness and interests, in the children's lives. Joy is to the mind and heart pretty much what oxygen is to the lungs and blood. And so there are parishes where games-clubs exist along with the usual confraternities and guilds. And in schools, as often as not, teachers lead and inspire and organise in the playground as well as in the class-room. And there are, of course, the regular school football and cricket clubs. And there is the great play-centre movement. But I sometimes wonder whether grown-ups realise that in providing all this, they are providing more than just the splendid exercise and exhilaration of actually playing football and basket ball; more than the immediate discipline of obeying the captain and the referee, and playing for the side, and taking a win or a loss in an equally sporting spirit. I believe children (and especially boys) look upon membership of a cricket or football club almost as a vocation. They long, not merely to play cricket, but to belong to the cricket club. Once they are members, they experience a deep sense of satisfaction. And, after all, the ideals of cricket and football, and, in fact, all team games, are good training for the soul (as has been said in *The Sower* more than once lately). I believe that if membership of a games-club was looked upon in the same spirit as membership of a Scout troop (that is, with as much emphasis on moral worth as on the mere efficiency and skill

in the game), it would have a more direct effect upon the boys and girls, as well as being more soul-satisfying to themselves.

Then again, children are brimful of *loyalty*. If you have much to do with them out of school, you realise the strange, unreasoned loyalty they bear towards the (often) dingy, uninspiring place to which they are compelled to go to be forcibly educated. They make the most of its good points; and even, sometimes, glory in what Government Inspectors would have quite another song about! I remember once taking some small boys, who belonged to a particularly antiquated and uncomfortable Catholic school, to see the Tower of London. As we walked across Tower Bridge and came in view of the neat grey walls and turrets, one of them cried, with complacent scorn, "Call that *old*? Our school looks *much* older than *that!*"

If schools made more of this instinct, they could wield an enormous power for good in the whole life of each child, as well as finding a short cut to the concrete results they want to obtain. Also, they would be preparing the natural faculties for the more spiritual development. If schools took a little extra trouble to work up a tradition (like a regiment's) and a "spirit" (like a religious Order's), and had a few concrete "counsels of perfection," and mottoes, like the Scouts, and, if possible, a touch of romance somehow worked in, *membership of the school* would become a very real thing. The best children would find an unreasoned but very real longing satisfied, and the worst would, perhaps, in spite of themselves, be raised at least to a standard that did not shame the school. Of course, it requires a continual and renewed appeal to the imagination; new stunts and enterprises—but then, young human nature, that has not yet become resigned to life being merely dull, will always want that: and quite right, too. And such *simple* things, so long as they are fresh and practical, and explained with joy and keenness by the grown-ups, fulfil the requirement.

Punctuality, cleanliness, chivalry, attendance at Mass—when all these things are an integral part of the spirit and

tradition of the school, and a real part of the child's concept of membership of the school, they get put into practice, and anything so opposed to common-sense psychology as *punishments* becomes unnecessary.

And then in the sphere of ideas and knowledge, this thought of *being something* is the proper starting-point for all instruction. After all, the *reason* for learning history and geography is because we are men and women; because history is the story of the great human family which we belong to, and whose members, though the humble children of God, are yet the "lords of creation." Geography is mostly the story of man's conquest of nature. As *men and women* we *must* know about it all. And then we can narrow down a bit, and realise the privilege of being members of Western Christendom—the race that has embodied and made dominant the spirit of Christ, the instrument of true Christian civilisation. (But, of course, it all wants telling in concrete stories: I only use this high-flown phraseology in order to be brief.) And finally comes true patriotism (not Chauvinism) in an interest in English history and geography (or Irish, or American) *because* we *are* Englishmen, or Irishmen, or Americans. And that, again, can be narrowed down to proper pride about being a Londoner or a citizen of Birmingham, or Dublin, or Chicago: which is a realisation which may have really *practical* results. Anyway, it all makes the lessons matters of more intimately personal concern to the children.

And then biography—whether it is the stories of Saints or heroes, or statesmen or philanthropists, that are recounted. They are object-lessons in *being men,* in being Englishmen. What's the good of hero-worship unless you *mean* to live up to that standard yourself? But if such an idea has never been proposed to the children; if great men are merely names and dates and facts, and their personalities so high-and-mighty as to be unapproachable, they really are not very much good.

(iii.)

To sum up briefly, then, to *be* anything satisfactorily, you have to know something about it, and want to be that thing. And the process of becoming it involves all the ideas about it passing through the imagination—going in at one end of the machine merely facts and ideas, and coming out at the other end, *personality*.

And nowhere is this truer than in the case of religion.

It takes a great deal of imagination (in the sense used here) to be a good Catholic. If, then, we want the children to become good Catholics, we must seize them at the critical age (about nine) when they want to begin *being* things (real things) rather than only doing things, and see that they know—in a real, sensible, living way, like we know ourselves—what the Catholic life is. Then we must try and encourage the desire to be Catholics; finally we must try and help the imaginative process to work.

All this is, of course, just the "*Sower* scheme" put in other words. But it is a help sometimes to look at things from the point of view of the psychological way they work. Desire, Interest, Purpose, Reasonable Discipline, in what part of the child's mental life do they exist? Children are not self-analysing, like grown-ups at a retreat; nor have they much power of intellectual thought; nor very much spiritual sense of duty, of the purely detached sort; nor will a conventional repetition of good actions necessarily result in "acquired virtue." It is, therefore, rather a waste of time and energy to batter on these ever-closed and silent doors. But concentrate on the right door—imagination—and oh, how easily it flies open! And once open, all should go apace, because the Catholic Faith was devised by a God Who was also an omniscient Man, and Who planned out His Church in just the very way most certain to appeal to the imagination of His "little children."*

And once the children have realised Catholic life as

* John xiii. 33.

a vital, concrete affair, their loyal patriotism about the Kingdom of Heaven has a vitality usually lacking in their elders. Grown-up English people easily slip into the "water-tight compartment" attitude of mind. Home-life, business, sport, intellectual pursuits, and religion, scarcely interact on each other at all. Children are not like that. They are more like what one imagines the early Christians must have been, or the English at the time of St. Swithin. For instance, two football teams meet on the ground. They eye each other critically for a few minutes, and presently begin to talk. It seems quite natural that one of the first questions should be, "Are you Caflics?" And when a league cup is won it is put down as much to the prayers of the team as their good play.

One of my Cubs was invited to spend a week in camp with a Protestant pack. I asked him whether he ever got chipped about being a Catholic. "Only sometimes," he answered, "when I was saying my prayers. They used to call me the Pope of Rome." "But didn't they say prayers themselves?" I asked. "Oh yes," replied Ted, "but, you see, I used to say the *Our Father* and the *Gloria,* and bits of the Mass, in *Latin."* Ted, in short, had gone out of his way to advertise the fact he was a Catholic, and evidently gloried in being called the Pope of Rome.

Their attitude towards non-Catholics is rather early Christian, too. There is none of the bitterness of controversy, or irritation, or uncharitableness. They feel sorry for the people who, through ignorance, are outside the true Church. Any apostolic effort appeals to them. A group of my small friends—regular slum ragamuffins—used to haunt a C.E.G. stand in the dinner hour, for the pleasure of hearing the truth put before Protestants. Once, a man in the crowd affirmed there were only two Sacraments. "So I told him as there was *seven,"* said Phil, "and I told him what they were."

Another one told me he was "instructing a Protestant boy." He was taking him through the Catechism, starting right away from "Who made me?" The same boy called on the lapsed Catholic mother of a Belgian boy, and

arranged his transfer to the Catholic school. And once I saw the militant spirit break out.

It was in Dan. He was helping me do a periodical "tidy" of my room. I threw two fat volumes into the paper basket. He fished them out, of course, and put them with other things he'd salvaged. "No," I said, "they aren't for you. They're horrid books, against the Church." "*Against* the Church?" he queried, incredulously. "What do they say?" I gave him some samples of Kensitism. His eyes blazed—he had never thought of Protestantism *that* way. "You can tear up the books if you like," I said. So, standing straddle-legged, rigid and wrathful in the centre of the room, he rent the offending pages from their covers and tore them fiercely into a thousand pieces, till the floor was littered with the fray. He breathed hard and his blue eyes were relentless. I felt sure he would have followed Simon de Montfort to France, if he had lived in those days, and the Albigensians would have had no quarter.

VIII.—The Psychology of Charity

(i.)

IT was as we were strolling back to camp tea, after a blissful afternoon on the shore, that I received this little rebuke: "Miss, d'you know that whenever we tell you anything, you always say 'Good!'" "Do I, Tom?" I replied. "Well, you see, you always tell me such jolly things, that it's the proper thing to answer." "But," he said thoughtfully, "just now Patsy said to me, 'Yesterday I trod on a forn, and it went right through my sand-shoe into my foot. And when I told Miss about it, she said, "Good!"'"

I felt deeply humbled. I thought I could listen to at least three conversations at the same time, and reply intelligently to all of them. But evidently I had failed Patsy in the expected sympathy about his "forn" in the flesh; in fact, I had made a definitely unfeeling remark.

Perhaps there is nothing that children so continuously demand from us as sympathy: and not merely over their little scratches and bruises, but over their joys and interests and disappointments; in their learning and in their play; in their successes and in their many failures. And sympathy more than anything else depends on the imagination. How *constantly* we fail them: sometimes through mere inattention, and saying "Good!" when all is not well. But more often it is because we have not used our imaginations, and represented to ourselves the way things must strike the child; nor our imaginative memories, and recalled how we ourselves felt over this and that, in childhood.

Almost the whole art of education depends on imaginative sympathy—one way or another. And it works, too, in a subtle way, apart from actual *teaching*. Also, it is a matter which should be *taught to* the children. History, literature, art, biography, all subjects that touch human

nature intimately, are unintelligible unless approached with imaginative sympathy. But, above all, the art of living needs sympathy. And sympathy is the very soul of our holy religion—the way love, *caritas,* comes to flower in the naturally selfish human heart, and binds it to all other hearts. The way, too, that love of God begins: for imaginative sympathy with Christ Our Lord in His earthly experience is the first step to all that may, with the help of the Holy Ghost, take place in the soul; the first step He Himself devised.

(ii.)

Only by imaginative sympathy can you win the trust and friendship of the children, because only if they feel that you truly understand and are one with them in interests and enthusiasms will they really take you into their confidence. But, of course, children and grown-ups are very different, so that only by a real effort of the imagination or the memory can we realise exactly how children are feeling. If education was merely spelling and sums, it would not matter if there was but small sympathy between teacher and taught. But Catholic education has got to deal with the biggest, the deepest, the most intimate thing in human life, and that is why things like imagination and sympathy are not mere ideals, fads, counsels of perfection for people of leisure, but practical, concrete necessities. There is not one aspect of religion taught by the teacher, and another by the priest in the pulpit, the confessor in confessional, the novice-master in chapter, the teacher is dealing with hearts and souls; and it depends largely on him whether or not the priest, the novice-master, and even (I say it with all reverence) the Holy Ghost, will stand any chance with the boy or girl in the years to come.

High-sounding words! but the facts are very simple—mere *common sense.* It's just a matter of talking the right way, and knowing what things come first in a child's mind, and remembering a few little things about childhood: as, for instance, that a grin is the natural and proper expression of a child's face, and that he himself

needs to laugh frequently—almost a physical need, and certainly a mental need. The more you give him opportunity for smiles, chuckles, simple healthy little bubbles and bursts of laughter while you are talking, the more he will feel you are a sensible person, his friend; the more able will he be to take in what you are saying; the more your points will get into his mind and stay there; and, last but not least, he will enjoy listening to you, and be prepared to keep on. It is nota matter of elaborate jokes or buffoonery or comic stories, but just a little humour in speaking of all the ordinary funny things of life—a realisation that most people and things *are* funny, and that laughter is the sanest and healthiest thing in all the world. "Fr. —— is coming to see us to-night," I said to a little scrap of a slum boy, rough and slightly deficient. "Oo—*good*!" he exclaimed. He'd only seen Fr. —— once, so I was surprised at his bright smile of pleasure. "Did you like him?" I said. "Yus," said Harry, "'e don't arf make yer larf." And yet Fr. —— had not gone out of his way to be strikingly witty last time: it was just that you were free to laugh while he talked, and that he expected you to.

People speak of the importance of not speaking to children in anger, or with impatience or irritation; of being always just and fair; of not making unreasonable demands, or being foolishly exacting, or doubting their word lightly, etc. But if one did any of these things to another grown-up, one would be termed, purely and simply, *rude*. Well, it's just as "rude" to do it to a child. In fact it's ruder. Because a child has more real dignity than grown-ups; a more sensitive spirit; has not yet lost his innate politeness and sense of values, and so is far more wounded and surprised by rudeness than other already world-hardened grown-up people. Also he *may* not retaliate. It would be an excellent exercise in humility to sit down and examine one's conscience as to the number of times one's rebukes to children have been rude. And one would have to remember that for none of them did one apologise afterwards! And yet, after the first flush of resentment, they never bore a grudge about it; were always ready to meet one with

politeness and generous expectancy, and give one another chance.

But grown-ups who treat children rudely, who give abrupt orders, and make uncontrolled, exasperated criticisms, and rebuke with irritation, are teaching their children to be rude. The elder's manner may be termed "impatient" and the child's "naughty," but that is only *une façon de dire.* "Rude" is the plain English for the thing. One sees it illustrated not only in nurseries and families and schools (with the children), but also wherever there is authority and subordination between grown-ups (*e.g.*, in households, and shops, and hospitals). A courteous authority means a courteous set of subordinates. But it is especially so with children, because they are unconsciously impressionable and consciously imitative, and not yet very reasonable.

I was told the following little story the other day: A friend of mine overheard, in the hall of some London flats, an altercation going on between a very undisciplined little boy and a very irritable mother, and it ended thus: "Donald, when will you stop being rude to me?"

"When you stop being rude to me!"

I don't approve of Donald's repartee, but I think it held a very deep lesson for his mother.

And, of course, the short cut to acquiring the right manner with children is to imagine how it feels to be a child, and so inexperienced as always to be making mistakes and blunders; and to realise just how one would like to be corrected for them—just what way would have the effect of making one really sorry, really full of a purpose of amendment, really keen to be correct (or good) next time. Imagine yourself a deliberately naughty child; and try and imagine what kind of correction would be most likely to reform you. Then imagine yourself a naughty child trying to reform, but generally failing. Picture yourself receiving encouragement for your good efforts—oh, there's no end to the use of one's imagination: it's worth all the training colleges in the kingdom!

And then the matter of mistakes. Mistakes are only

the ordinary way of gaining experience. We all learn by mistakes, whether it is clever we are trying to become, or good. We grown-ups have to puzzle out the lesson of our mistakes for ourselves. But children have mothers and teachers to explain what the mistake teaches, and how it can be avoided, next time. There's a strange inconsequence in the connection that has grown up between mistakes and punishments—whether the mistakes are matters of learning or conduct. But, of course, it takes imaginative sympathy to find out how the mistake arose, and just what it teaches, and how it can best be turned to account.

A little imagination in the matter of prayers would make a very great difference. Can we really suppose that the children are praying when they recite prayers in a kind of chant, with meaningless emphasis, and a sense that they must behave in the correct way because the teacher's eyes are on them? Imagine how it feels to be a child praying. . . . Well, why not change it all, and have *genuine prayer,* the teacher praying, too, with eyes shut. Never mind if a few of them fidget—Our Lord won't mind; and if some of them don't say the prayers at all—well, it's sad for them, that's all. But most of them *would*—simply and really.

(iii.)

But imaginative sympathy is not a thing only we grown-ups must cultivate in ourselves. It is (together with a reasonable desire to do right, and an unshakable faith in Catholic doctrine) the most important point to be developed in the children's characters. One of the perfectly new and original ideas which Our Lord introduced into the world was *love—caritas.* No one had ever formulated the idea before. ("A *new* commandment I give unto you," said Our Lord, "That you love one another.") The nearest approach had been, on the one hand, unreasoned instincts of one sort or another (always semi-selfish) and on the other, the impossibly cold and detached philosophical altruism of people like Plato (later elaborated and made

irritatingly subjective by Marcus Aurelius). Jewish mysticism was connected entirely with the relation of the human heart with God, and not with other men. Christ's teaching was, indeed, startlingly new. St. John was the first to translate it into practice and write of it with almost passionate pleading; and St. Paul was the first to expound the theology and philosophy of it. And after that, it was one of the main themes of all the Christian writers down the ages, and one of the chief motive forces in the lives of all the Saints. And now the idea of Christian love has become so part of the Christian temperament that we take it as a matter of course. Dull and uninspiring people presume to give forth platitudes thereon. Simple, brave, kindly people (like the Tommies at the front) live it out day by day, and are pushed by the force of it even to the giving of their lives for another (men who know practically nothing of Christ). And Catholics, who through grace have come to live by the laws of love, are only conscious of an enthusiasm that seems almost a natural instinct (is, in fact, a "baptismal instinct"), and casts a kind of radiance of sunlight over their world, and makes their relations with others joyful and easy.

All this is the triumph of Christianity in the world—the spirit of Christ leavening the selfishness of humanity. But the perversity of the human heart, the "occasions" for evil presented by the world, the flesh and the devil, often hinder this spirit of Christ and destroy its effect. Especially in the last few centuries a veneer of miscalled Christian charity—mere respectability—has hidden an almost complete selfishness in all grades of society. Hence, in educating the children, almost our chief duty is to foster this flame of charity so ready to burn in unspoiled Christian hearts born of generations of Christian men.

What, then, is the psychology of charity? For if we understand that, a little, we shall have a short cut to success. How, in other words, does charity work, from the point of view of a mental process?

Does it not depend on sympathy? And does not sympathy depend on the imagination?

To sympathise with another (especially one very different from yourself in circumstances, temperament, etc.) you have to imagine his feelings. Having done that, you may either harden your heart and try and forget, or you may make his feelings a real concern of yours, so that you literally feel for him. Here is sympathy, and here is the beginning of charity. Then, for Christ's sake, or from a sense of duty, or from a personal feeling of compassion, you take steps (by words of comfort, or by deeds or prayers) to alleviate his condition; or, maybe, to enhance his joy by sharing it. Here is charity in action. And it is a blessed law of grace that sympathy and service lead on to real love, a genuine enthusiasm of the heart, not only for the individual, but for all men. Love is the antithesis of selfishness; and selfishness is the root sin from which all others grow. After all, it is the real *impulses of the heart* that energise our actions in the long run (even if unconsciously), for we are not creatures of cold calculation who can live by a philosophical theory, and regulate our every action by a detached sense of duty. Hence charity as a substitute for self-love is the real remedy (the psychological remedy, if you will) for pretty well all our shortcomings, and that is just what Christ Our Lord preached continually, and St. John reiterated and St. Paul explained. But the human mind is such that it takes a continual activity of the imagination to keep charity alive (just as it takes a continual renewal of grace).

So, with the children the first step is to get them to imagine the feelings of others. Story-telling and dramatisation is the most elementary way. It is especially good to get them to make their own the feelings of people who have really lived—historical personages, the Saints, or people of our own day (*e.g.*, the men at the front, explorers, heathens hearing of Christ for the first time); to feel with them not only in their sorrows and hardships, but in their joys and adventures and triumphs. It gives a breadth of mind, a largeness of heart, an understanding of humanity, a great forbearance and tolerance. As a matter of fact, imaginative sympathy is becoming quite an attribute of

the modern mind. It is reflected in our art, drama, literature; even in theology (as in books like Vonier's "Personality of Christ"); in science (as in experimental psychology); in the Press; in the art of advertising (*e.g.*, the harrowing pictures of the starving women and children of Central Europe). There was not much imaginative sympathy in the Middle Ages, or there could not have been so much cruelty; and persecution would not have commended itself to kindly Christian people as a method of persuading their fellow-men. Slave traffic, the sweating system, the old educational régime—all these were simply the result of lack of imagination. Perhaps even heresy might be blamed in the same quarter: Luther could not imagine a God simple enough to take delight in Catholic practices and give His grace in response thereto; Calvin could not imagine a God possessing justice and yet mercy.

So imaginative sympathy should not be hard to arouse in the children of this generation; and in the study of history, literature, geography, and religion may be found ample opportunity for its development.

The next step is to make it a personal thing, so that the child himself *feels for* others. Here, boys are inclined to be behind girls. Boys will openly jeer at physical deformity; they will penalise another boy who is weak or timorous, keeping him out of their games; they will bully each other; and (especially country boys) will be quite disgustingly cruel to small animals. Girls, on the other hand, very rarely do any of these things.

The next step is to get the feelings translated into actuality. The Scout's idea of the "good turn," and chivalry to all weaker people (or animals), need not be exclusively the Scout's. Why not make it the Catholic child's? The various funds for missionaries, orphanages, etc., are another way. The giving of help at home should come in. And the idea of helping the teacher by keeping quiet during a lesson, arriving punctually, etc., would be a practical effort in the right direction.

Then it will have to be linked up with religion, and Matthew xxv. 40 quoted ("Inasmuch . . . "), and fre-

quently brought home in one way or another (such as by stories from the Saints—St. Martin and others). Thus the real love of man that will inevitably result from sympathy and service will be closely welded with love of God.

And finally the life of Christ must be studied with imaginative sympathy; Christ Our Lord must be felt with in all His joys and sufferings.

And here, if we may put it so, the Holy Ghost takes over. But because spiritual development, the assimilating of a soul to Christ, is a thing outside the scope of a human teacher's effort—beyond, even, the conscious effort of the learner—we must not forget that the steps by which a soul reaches this point are the simple things of the human mind—the way it works, starting in the natural sphere, and passing on to faith and the realms where grace comes in. And that, of course, is the whole point of this little book.

16004